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**FROM THE CRUCIFIX
TO THE CROSS**

AND

THE HERETICS

STORIES OF WESTERN MEXICO

BY

HARRIET CRAWFORD

F. L. ROWE, PUBLISHER, CINCINNATI, OHIO

1909

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PUBLISHER'S INTRODUCTION.

The two stories comprising this volume are true delineations of life in Old Mexico. The writer of these stories has been quite a part of the incidents of the stories.

They deal in a mild spirit with the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church, and show the gradual leading out, by Protestant teaching, from the errors of the former to the clearer light as taught by the latter.

We are hopeful that the circulation of these stories may be encouraged by all lovers of the truth, and that the impressions made may lead others from darkness into the glorious light of God's truth.

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FROM THE CRUCIFIX TO THE CROSS.

CHAPTER I.

"THE CRAZY OLD MONK."

Brother Leonardo, the old priest of the Callistro School, was kneeling on the cold, earth floor of his cell. The cell was his own little room, and he was his own willing prisoner. The room was bare of furnishings, save a narrow iron bedstead and a low wooden stand. A "petate" (native mat) served as mattress, and across this lay a coarse woolen blanket, the only covering. The walls were of adobe, the plastering still clinging in places. On these walls hung a few brightly-colored prints of some of the saints, most conspicuous that of St. Peter, with keys suspended from his girdle.

In a niche in the wall stood a clay figure of the Virgin Mary, bright in blue and gold, with the infant Jesus in her

arms. Hanging above this image was a wooden cross, upon it the painted figure of Jesus crucified.

Under this cross and under this image kneeled the old man. His worn black robe had fallen from him, revealing undergarments coarse and still more worn. His face was very thin and deeply marked by suffering. As he kneeled, clasping his brazen crucifix, his black sunken eyes fixed upon the image before him, he prayed.

"O, holy Mother of God, have pity upon this feeble child of thine! Precious heart of Mary, be my salvation!"

Suddenly, there was a voice at his door, a child's voice, calling, "Abre, Tio, abre!" (Open, Uncle, open!) A light crept into those dull eyes. The old man arose, moved slowly across the floor, and withdrew the bolt from the door. There sprang into the room a handsome boy of about twelve years of age, straight and lithe, with the step of a soldier and with eyes flashing and black.

"Santísima Virgen! How you do love this dark corner! Come out into the garden, Tio mio, into the sunlight and among the flowers!"

The old man looked fondly into the eyes of the boy and said:

"My beautiful, the Virgin smiled when thou wast born! Sunshine, birds and flow-

ers were made for thee! But not for me! I soon must leave them all, but ere I go I must find peace, peace for my soul!"

"And wilt thou find it here?" interrupted the boy, looking about him.

The old man only replied by drawing the boy toward him. Then he led him to the little iron bedstead, where together they sat a moment in silence.

"Uncle," began the boy, "there is a stranger in our town, a white man, from the great country north of us. As he walks our streets he carries papers and little books. We met him this morning, Juan and I. He held out a little paper to me, and I reached to take it, but Juan drew me back, and told me not to touch it. The stranger did not speak. He only looked at me and smiled, and there was kindness in his smile and in his face. But Juan hurried me on and told me that the holy father said that whoever should talk to this stranger, or should take aught from him, would be cut off from the Holy Church and his soul forever lost. For this stranger, Juan said, is one of those 'Protestantes' lately come into our town."

The old man had been listening, but at the word "Protestante" he raised his head, and with horror in his voice, exclaimed, 'Ay Dios mio! And have those accursed

heretics found our beautiful little city? Have they come here to lead away our young and our innocent ones? But surely the Holy Church will not permit! Thou, my boy, avoid them, for they are the devil, and they lie in wait to destroy both soul and body!"

The boy did not reply. The old man paused and seemed lost in thought. At length the boy arose, threw his arms around his uncle's neck, saying, "Juan is waiting for me in the court, and I must be going. Then, adios, till to-morrow!"

"My boy, my beautiful boy!" murmured the old man, as the boy disappeared. "The Holy Virgin and the Saints protect him! Save him from the clutches of those devils!"

The old monk was too well wrought up to return to his knees. He could only walk his floor. But at length he went to the little iron-grated window, the only place, save the door, where the sun and air could enter. There he stood, looking into the courtyard, and over the wall, into the street beyond. But he saw not what his eye rested upon. He saw not the sinking sun was touching with gold the distant hilltops, the cathedral spires and even the old adobe walls about him, before leaving them in darkness. He saw nothing

and knew naught but his boy, and that he was in danger.

At last, as the gold was fading from sky and mountain tops, the old man turned, drew his cloak about him, passed through his door out into the yard. He seated himself on a low bench which stood against the high adobe wall surrounding the building. As he sat there, again lost in thought, we leave him a moment to repeat the story of his life.

Spain had taken possession of Mexico, and for three hundred years her people had been under the yoke of the Church of Rome. Among those who had crossed the seas from old Castile to seek the silver and the gold of the new country was the high-born family of Calistro. More than one generation had made their homes in the Capital City of Mexico, and had ever given freely to the Church their silver and their gold, their sons and their daughters.

Ignacio Calistro was the first to break the family circle, and he, with his young bride, crossed the vast tablelands, the high mountains, and came into the new and western lands of Mexico.

Their son, Leonardo, was dedicated, from infancy, to the priesthood. Submissive by nature, his childhood and youth were easily molded by instructors of the Holy Church.

But not so his beautiful Sister Feliciana, a couple of years his senior. Her high spirit chafed under the confinement of "Sisters' Schools," and for her family's sake she was privileged, as no other pupil, to go and come largely at will.

When Feliciana was only 18 years of age she attracted the admiration of the handsome and brave Colonel Valentino, who had been sent with troops from the City of Mexico to protect the newer towns of the west from the devastations of mountain brigands and lawless tribes of Indians. The Church was wise enough to see a great gain for herself in the marriage of one of her favorite daughters to the popular young "Independente" and soldier, for the country had been passing through years of struggle, that terrible struggle between Church and State when the State, under its noble leader Juarez, had come off victorious.

Some years later, upon the death of the parents, the Calistro estates were left in larger part to the Church, the son and daughter receiving smaller shares. Leonardo, now a young man, a little over 20 years of age, had learned perfectly the first great commandment of the Church of Rome—submission. It was only to be expected,

then, that he yielded to her request to dedicate to the "Holy Church" his own beautiful home, retaining such a part of it as he should require. As a return for his sacrifice he was promised a high position in the Church, honor in this life, and his soul's eternal happiness.

For some years he was happy in his surrender, and in the praise of men. His home became the Bishop's residence, and the young man was his favored adopted son. But upon the death of the Bishop the building became the training school for the young priests. The new instructors required more and more of the building, until it became evident to Leonardo that the only room he could call his own was the little back room in which we found him. He had finished his course of instruction, and was prepared for promotion in orders.

But when he dared remind his instructors of that promise, he was briefly told that the promise, as well as other conditions of the past, were no longer of value. And as the young man grew sad and silent under his disappointment, he was told that such spirit was insubordination. He was told that with a spirit in rebellion his great gift of property even could count him

nothing, and he must again, by other gifts and other good deeds, gain the approbation of the Church and his soul's salvation.

Gradually hope had gone out of his life, and with it ambition. Happiness, too, had left him. He cared no longer for a place among men. But his troubled, wearied soul longed for peace, and for such peace he sought day and night, if by hunger or by thirst, or by cold or by solitude, or by prayers he might find rest and quiet for his soul. His sister had begged him to make his home with her, but in vain. She however, sent almost daily the old servant Juan to minister to his needs. But the food was scarcely tasted. He remained apart from men, alone in his little room—scarce past the prime of life, yet worn, bent and broken, known only to men as the "Crazy old monk of the Calistro School."

But life still held one thing for the old man, and that was the beautiful boy Rudolfo, his sister's youngest child. For the daily visits of his boy the old man waited, as the fevered man watches through the hours of the night for the coming day; and it was of this boy, Rudolph, that he was thinking as he sat upon the bench against the old adobe wall. Passers along the street moved near the

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wall, and the old man could hear their words if he chose to listen. A voice suddenly waked him from his reveries.

"'Tis a new doctrine, this stranger brings. A new doctrine, yet I like it, for it seems the truth! He further explains to-night in his own dwelling. I care not what the priest may say, I go to hear!"

"Then I will accompany thee," was the reply. "Where lives this stranger?"

"On the corner of Streets-Cuatro and Don Luis."

The voices passed on, but the old man started, for, like a flood breaking its barriers, so rushed forth long-pent memories, sweeping before him the years forgotten.

"Calles Cuatro and Luis!" He could see those streets; he could see the corner, where stood the long low adobe room, the school room, where so long ago he had learned to spell the words of his primer, and where he had committed to memory his catechism. His sister's home was now near that corner, where lived his beautiful boy. And there, too, near to them, lived that heretic, that Protestant! Oh, it must not be! His boy so near to danger, and he so powerless to save!

He could no longer sit there. He arose, and when again in his little room the door barred behind him, he kneeled under the

painted image and under the wooden cross.

"Holy Mother of my Church, save my boy! My own, beautiful boy!"

Long time he kneeled, his crucifix in hand, prayers on his lips, but chill and midnight in his soul.

At length he arose, and with no light in his room save the light of the stars through the little grated window, he laid himself down upon his hard bed. But not to sleep; the floods of memory still swept on, bringing before him scenes long gone. He saw again the days of his boyhood, the days of his youth, when he passed from the parochial school into the school for the training of the priests. He saw the companions of that school. One face came before him, which he had long forgotten, Felipe, his happy, merry companion. He remembered that Felipe had sometimes talked about the "Protestantes." Felipe had known them in his own town, and he said they were a good people. Indeed, Felipe had called into question some of the teachings of their own Church, contrasting them unfavorably with the teachings of the Protestants.

He remembered how, one day, the Father Superior had called his pupils together and told them that among them was a traitor, a false one, and that he must, at

once, be driven from them before he could do injury. It was Felipe who was thus, without warning, sent from them. But Felipe had found the moment to say before leaving: "I am driven from you because I dare utter what is true. It is the truth; some time this truth will reach you here, and you will know it for yourselves!"

And then there passed before him, slowly and wearily, the long years of disappointments and of sufferings. He had failed to find in life what he had expected, and he supposed the fault was his. He did not know that he had been deceived by those who had been his guides along his path through life.

CHAPTER II.

THE BEQUEATHED CRUCIFIX.

When Rudolfo went to visit his uncle, the following day, the old monk repeated his warnings. Each successive day the priest earnestly besought his boy to avoid the Protestant stranger. Rudolfo said little. But there came a day when he found his uncle unable to arise from his bed.

"Dios mio! You are sick and alone! I will call the physician at once!"

"No, no, my boy! I need no medicine, save for my soul! My body you will soon lay to rest. But my soul—I can not tell. I have worn all my life the scapular,* and the Holy Mother may be pleased to remember her promise, but I am not sure, my boy, I am not sure. But I can do no more!"

"I will run and call my mother!" interrupted the boy.

"Nay, go not! Stay thou by me! Come

* Scapular.—"To those who wear the scapular during life, the Virgin makes this promise: 'I, their glorious Mother, on the Saturday after their death, will descend to purgatory, and deliver those whom I shall find there and take them up to the holy mountain of eternal life?'—'What Rome Teaches," page 193.



nearer to me and make me this last promise! Avoid those heretics! And one thing more, when I am gone, wilt thou take this little crucifix which has hung on my bosom all these years and wear it on thine own heart? It will keep thee from harm and it will save thee from the evil workings of those heretics."

"I will keep it, Uncle; and now shall I go and call the priest to hear thy last confession?"

"Nay, boy, they helped me not while I lived, will they help me while I die? There is no one to help me!" The voice was very weak. "My boy, stay by me, for I am alone, alone!"

The frightened boy was kneeling, sobbing, by the bedside. The old man lay quietly, too weak to speak.

"Tio," said the boy, after his sobs had passed. "Tio, I have listened to the stranger. You told me not to listen to him, so I feared to tell you what I had done. My mother, too, and the priest told me not to go near, but what do I care!" said the boy, throwing proudly back his head, his dark eyes flashing. "I went at night, and stood under his window on the street. I can not tell you much he said, but he spoke not of saints or of the Holy Virgin. 'Jesus is the one who saves us,'

he said. And he sang beautiful words about Jesus and about heaven. His voice is soft and sad when he sings, Tio. I wish you could hear him. I stood at the door and waited a moment. He came to speak to others who were standing there. But when he saw me he smiled and said: 'Yes, I remember you.' And he gave me this little paper. Shall I read it to you, Tio?"

The old man was looking at the boy. He made no reply.

Rudolfo read slowly, spelling some of the words.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."

"Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven, given unto men, whereby we must be saved."

The boy turned the card. "Here are the words he sang, Tio!"

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly.
Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on thee."

"Tio," said the boy, raising his head,

"nothing they say or sing is about the Holy Virgin or about the saints. It is only Jesus! Is it true?"

But the old man, still looking at the boy, only said, "I do not know."

The following day Rudolfo found his uncle scarce able to speak. The food which the faithful Juan had brought was refused. The old man would have no help.

The boy kneeled by his uncle's bedside.

"I went again last night to hear the stranger. I do not care, though the priest forbid!" that same fearless look leaping into his eyes. "And there was another man there, one of our own people. He, too, read from the book. He, too, kneeled and prayed; but he held no crucifix and he called no name of virgin or saint. I waited again at the door till they both came. The man of our country took me by the hand and asked me my name. And when I told him I was the son of General Valentino he laughed and said, 'Of course, my boy; his eyes thou hast, and even his same proud hold of the head! I knew thy father, boy, and thy mother! And hast thou an Uncle Leonardo?' he asked. And when I told him that thou wast sick, he said, 'Oh, take me to see him, boy!' Shall I bring him to see thee, and dost thou know him, Tio?"

The old man moved. "Yes," he said; then suddenly, "Oh, no, boy! it would not do. I am afraid!" he whispered.

"Uncle, you fear the priests here! But I am not afraid! I will bring him to-night, for I promised him I would. No one shall see us, so do not fear, Tio mio!"

Through the long hours lay the dying man, waiting. Life was very feeble, but his mind still active. Very quiet it was, in that little back room, but the sick man still could hear the voice of his boy. "There is no other name—there is no other name—Jesus, let me to thy bosom fly."

Dusk was sifting over the town, men returning to their homes. But no one took special note of two figures, a man and a boy, as they moved silently along the narrow back lane, opened the back court gate, crossed the yard to the door of the "old crazy monk of Calistro."

Only the light of the moon shone through the little grated window. The incomer leaned low to look into the face of the dying man, for not even in the clear light of day would one have guessed that the thin, worn face upon the hard pillow was once the young man Leonardo.

The visitor spoke his name. The dying man heard the voice, raised his hand and whispered:

"Felipe! my old friend Felipe!" Then Felipe sat on the edge of the bed, the boy kneeled on the floor, and the dying man and the boy listened while Felipe talked. He spoke of the years that had passed when they were boys together. He told of the new and blessed life which had been his since he had found his Jesus; the story of the cross, so familiar to the dying monk, but never told like this; the sacrifice, so full and complete, that there was no longer need for penance, for intercession of priest, saint or virgin.

Slowly and feebly the old man's eyes moved from the pictures of saints, dimly outlined on the walls, to the image of the Virgin, then rested upon the little wooden cross. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me!" softly repeated Felipe.

The pictures and the image seemed to fade from before the dying man. Only the cross was visible. And then, only him upon the cross, no longer crucified, but glorified, waiting, with welcome in his face, and saying, as Felipe repeated:

"Come unto me and I will give thee rest—rest!"

Long time talked Felipe, in low tones, the dying man and the boy still listening.

At length Felipe said, "To-morrow I go

away. But we shall both meet again where we shall be at rest. I leave with you this little book, God's Word, the New Testament of his love. Your boy will read it to you when I am gone."

When the servant came the next morning, he saw the face of the old monk in perfect rest and peace. Rest and peace which his life of penance and of works never could have earned. Rest and peace which is the gift of God through his Son.

The little brazen crucifix had fallen to one side, but on his bosom, resting under those thin hands, lay Felipe's gift—the little New Testament.

Instinctively the servant Juan concealed the little book about his person, before calling help.

The Superior came for burial rites, the old monk's sister and her boy. The boy took with him the little crucifix as he had promised. There were few to mourn, and few to follow, to its resting place, the "old crazy monk of Callistro." But did it matter, if there was rejoicing in heaven?

CHAPTER III.

ELENA.

It was the beautiful month of May. Although in Western Mexico there are no severe frosts to strip the trees, still spring brings fresh green, and beautiful bloom. The houses of the well-to-do inclose an open court. Into this the rooms of the buildings open. This courtyard is often filled with beautiful flowers, sometimes a playing fountain of water in the midst.

It was in such a garden that there walked, one bright morning in May, a slender young girl—graceful her every movement, and her black eyes, large, soft and dreamy. She paused a moment to touch the snow white "gardenia" and then to pluck a spray of the fragrant jasmine. As she stood a moment under the oleander, with its bright pink blossoms, the street door opened. There sounded a step down through the corridor, into the garden and to her side. It was Rudolfo, her near neighbor, and almost constant companion.

"Bienvenida Rufo! Dost thou remember that this is the month of our Holy Mother,

the Blessed Virgin, and the month of her beautiful flowers? I go to-morrow to the great Cathedral to carry her my offering of flowers, pure and white, like herself. Thou wilt be there of course, Rufo?" The girl turned toward her friend.

"Cierito, Elenita, if thou art to be there!"

Rudolfo stood the next morning among the spectators and watched the girls, Elena among them, beautiful in their white dresses and fluttering ribbons. He saw them kneeling to lay their gifts of flowers before the large, painted and gilded image of the Virgin. He heard the soft chanting and the reciting of the prayers by the priests. The odor of the burning incense filled his nostrils. His senses were charmed, sight, hearing and smell. He stood, looked and listened, yet, boy as he was, he felt that something was lacking—something, he knew not what. There seemed to come between him, and the glitter about him, the little room on the street corner, where there were no bright colors, no gaily-painted images. The priests were chanting "Holy Mary! All power is given to thee, in heaven and in earth! There is no one, O most Holy Mary, who can know God but through thee. No one is saved but through thee!" The boy listening, thought of the words he had heard

the night before. The missionary had said, "Jesus is the one who saves! There is no other name whereby man can be saved!" And the boy wondered as he listened and remembered.

That afternoon, the two, the boy and the girl, were standing again among the flowers. "How lovely it was!" exclaimed Elena. "I know the Holy Virgin has accepted my offering. She will protect my life and she will save my soul."

"It is Jesus who saves," said the boy quietly.

Elena turned sharply upon him. "What dost thou mean, Rufo? It is blasphemy to talk so. They say the heretics thus blaspheme our Holy Virgin. Hast thou been listening to those heretics?"

The boy raised his head proudly and smiled.

"Tell me, Rufo, hast thou been listening to those Protestants?"

"Yes, I have listened to them, and talked with them," said the boy, still holding himself proudly before her. "They do not blaspheme the Holy Virgin! They are good people!"

"Dost thou not fear? Thou knowest what the Holy Fathers have told us about them."

"I fear?" laughed the proud boy. "Never!"

She stood for a moment, looking at him. Then, suddenly, as if seeming unwilling that her companion should possess a secret which she did not share, she said, "Ciertó, hast thou talked with the Protestant priest? Tell me about him. And what does he say?"

Then he told her of what he knew, but, instinctively, withheld the account of that night's visit with Felipe at his uncle's dying bed.

"It is strange," said the girl. "I would fear to listen to the stranger, but I would like to hear him sing!"

"Then go with me to-night! I will accompany thee. We will stand on the street and listen and no one shall know!"

But not until several nights had passed did the timid girl finally consent. It was already dark and Rudolfo found her waiting in the front doorway, her head and shoulders well wrapped in her silk "rebozo" (shawl). Yet even then she would retract her promise, but the boy, seizing her arm, forced her along by his side, down the street, till they stood on the sidewalk under the window.

There were numbers in the room. Many standing in the doorway and under the window, and the children were not noticed.

But did the missionary know, as he talked, that two of God's little ones were waiting without? "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not," he said. "Jesus calls them! Jesus loves the little ones," he said, and then sang in a soft voice.

"I think when I read that sweet story of old,

When Jesus was here among men,
How he called little children
Like lambs to his fold," etc.

The two listening there had not noticed a man in common working clothes who had followed them along the street and who had been standing by them. When they turned to go, the man spoke, for it was the old servant Juan, from Rudolfo's home.

"Young master, this is not the first time I have seen you here. But fear not. I carry no tales."

"I do not fear," interrupted the boy.

"Keep by me," added the old man. "You must return, for we may be missed at home."

"Not until I speak to the man," boldly said the boy, drawing the girl with him to the doorway, where stood the missionary speaking to those about him.

"My young friend again!" said the good

man, taking the boy by the hand. "Is this your sister?"

"No, ~~senor~~, my friend Elena." The timid girl had not dared raise her eyes, but when the missionary took the little trembling hands in his, she met his smile with hers.

"God bless you both," was all he said.

And then he turned to the servant Juan.

"I have seen you several times here. Will you not come in the next time?" Silently the old servant walked behind the two.

"I do not understand it very much," said the girl, "but I like the singing, and I like the Protestant priest, too. I wonder why we must not like him!"

The boy made no reply. He, too, was wondering. "Step into your own door, young master," said Juan. "I will accompany the miss to her home."

But there was company in the brightly-lighted "sala" in Elena's home; guests were dancing to the sound of music, and Elena slipped through the corridor, unnoticed, to her own room.

CHAPTER IV.

PURGATORY.

There was sadness in the great house of General Valentino. He had been brought home wounded in battle. Commanding his troops while repulsing an attacking tribe of Indians on the frontier, he had been seriously hurt. He was carried to his home, but the tedious travel and exposure inevitably had its effect. All that physicians and loving friends could do had been in vain, and now the brave soldier lay dying.

The physician had given place to the priest. The sick man had listened passively to the words of his dying confession which the priest had spoken, for the man had been too weak to utter them himself. The sign of the Holy Cross had been made upon his forehead, and he had been anointed with the holy oil. He heard the words of the priest. "Yo te absuelvo!" (I absolve thee!) ..

The priest had gone, and now the dying man aroused himself.

"Bring my boy to me and leave us here alone!"

Rudolfo kneeled, weeping, by the bedside. "My son, I had hoped to see thee take my place. There are many battles yet to be fought for our Mexico, and thou wilt be needed." The words were spoken slowly. "Yes, my son, thou wilt be needed. Nor are the battles all to be with sword and shot. I see strife of other sort ahead for our own land, and thou must be called to lead it on." His father paused.

"My boy, I have been watching thee. I have known how thou hast been attracted toward the Protestants. They are right, my boy; stay by them," he added as the boy started and raised his head. "I knew them and respected them when a young man in Mexico City. I knew they were right, but I came here, I forgot them, and forgot their teachings. I became a coward. I, who feared not the cannon's mouth, feared a woman, feared her laugh and ridicule, your mother, Rudolfo. And I have lived a life of falsehood. But thou, my boy, be brave, for in the struggle thou wilt be needed."

It was a very imposing burial service, conducted in the cathedral, and the procession was long that followed to its resting place the earthly remains of the famous and brave General Valentino. The boy, following sadly, remembered the quiet, un-

noticed laying away of his uncle, the old monk, and again he wondered.

The days of mourning were over. The widow, the Senora de Valentino, lived alone in her quiet house, with the servants and with the boy, for her two daughters had long since gone to distant homes of their own. Rudolfo was growing so tall, so handsome, so like his father. Proudly she looked upon him, and fondly she loved him.

One day a message of great importance was sent to the Senora de Valentino. It had been revealed that the spirit of the departed General Valentino was still in purgatory awaiting further prayers and gifts of money to effect his release.

The widow pleaded her departed husband's deeds of bravery, his generous gifts, when living, to the Church. "Yes," was the reply; his gifts and the gifts of the widow, made at the time of his death for the release of his soul, had been accepted; but they were not enough. During the lifetime of her husband, he had lacked a spirit of entire submission to the teachings of the Holy Church, and a lack of reverence for her doctrine. For this reason a still larger sum of money would be required, and would the widow furnish the means whereby to communicate with the Holy

Virgin? "Thou dost know, daughter," added the priest, "that many things are asked from God and are not granted; they are asked from Mary and are granted. And how is this? It is because God has thus decreed in honor of his Mother." "Mary co-operated in the salvation of man." "Mary was made the mistress of salvation." (These words are taken literally from "Glories of Mary.")

When asked the sum that would be required, the reply was: "Because of the deep esteem in which the departed is held, and because of the deep esteem in which the widow lives, the low sum of four thousand dollars will be required."

When the Senora said that such a sum she could not command, the answer was ready: "It matters not, daughter. It's equivalent will do. This house you live in can easily be transferred to the name and the use of the Church. But there need be no haste, daughter. Take thine own time to find another house, and meantime supplications will be made for thy departed husband's speedy release into glory."

The high-spirited boy was beside himself with wrath.

"The Church commands, and we must obey," was all the proud, though broken woman could reply. Then, for the first

time, the boy told his mother of his father's dying words, and of the occasion attendance upon the preaching of the Protestant. He begged her to go with him to listen, but she seemed only the more broken, and besought him not to bring further sorrow and disgrace by associating with the heretics.

Time passed on, and the widow, her boy and her faithful Juan had found another house, a smaller one, and the great home of the Valentinos had passed into the safe keeping of the Holy Church.

CHAPTER V.

THE YOUNG PRIEST.

One day, when the Senora de Valentino was seeking absolution of guilt, at the confessional, the man, her holy confessor, began to question her regarding her son.

"Thou hast good reason, daughter, to be proud of the young man. How handsome he is, how daring, and what talent he possesses! Hast thou thought to what his talents shall be given? Thou dost know, daughter, that there is no higher use for talents, such as his, than the service of our Holy Church. I know thy heart, and that thou dost wish to dedicate him to such service. He is now entering manhood, and it is high time to work in preparation for such high calling."

"But, Father," faltered the woman, "his father's wish was that he should follow in his own steps."

"Ah, yes, daughter, I know that was well. But think! Little dost thou know the honor, the powers of the priesthood. Woman, let me repeat. What are the powers of priesthood?"

"I. To say mass.

"II. To forgive sins.

"III. To preach the word of God, and perform other sacerdotal functions.

"In order to give to his priests the power of saying mass, our Lord Jesus Christ had to die. To redeem the world, it was not necessary that our Lord should die. A single drop of his sacred blood, a single tear, a single prayer of his, would have sufficed, but in order to establish the priesthood our Lord had to die.

"Who can forgive sins?

"There is a man on earth who can forgive sins, and that man is the Catholic priest. Yes, the priest not only declares that the sinner is forgiven, but he really forgives him.

"So great is the power of the priest that the judgments of heaven itself are subject to his decisions. The priest absolves on earth and God absolves in heaven.

"The priest is the co-operator, the assistant of God in heaven." (These words are quoted from "God the Teacher of Mankind."—Michael Muller.) "But thou dost know all this. And more—the Holy Church has need of thy son and all his talents. And to this end he must be placed in training. He must become an inmate of the Bishop's College of Training for the priesthood."

The father confessor did not add that he was aware of the growing acquaintance of the young man with the accursed Protestantism, and that this or some other step would be forced upon him to break him from such influences.

"But, Father," sobbed the broken woman, "he is my son, my only son. I need him! How can I live without him!"

"Daughter," said the man coldly, "thou dost forget that the Holy Church can more than make up to thee the sacrifice of thy son. Thy reward will be great in this life and in that to come!"

* * *

"Never for me, mother, the life of a prating priest! Never!" cried the young man, his eyes blazing and his voice trembling with wrath, when later the mother presented the subject to him.

"Not the black robe for me! Not the confessional box! My father's life for me. A soldier's life for me!"

"Yes," replied the mother sadly, "I know thy father's wish, and thou art so like him, too! But, son, to serve our Church is nobler, even, than to serve our country!"

The proud young man refused. Then followed days and weeks of entreaty from his mother, and flattery and promises from

the priest. How—he did not know—but at last he yielded, surrendered himself unwillingly to the life he hated. He said to himself he would try it for a while; he could leave it when he chose. The school of Calistro, his uncle's old home, became now his home. The little brazen crucifix, bequeathed him by his uncle, he now wore upon his bosom. His life seemed a mockery, yet as time wore on, the flattery and homage shrewdly bestowed had its effect, and he became seemingly contented, or at least unresisting.

He visited his mother, she growing sad in her loneliness and because promises for peace of mind were unfulfilled.

At such times he usually gained brief interviews with Elena.

And so the months grew into years. The life of confinement was irksome to his active temperament. He had time for reflection, for the studies were not pressing, neither did they feed mental cravings.

Readings and the committal to memory of the lives of the saints; the doctrines of the Church and the traditions, followed by discussions with the father instructors, or rather by lectures from them, were the principal requirements. Frequent readings of the Breviary and attendance upon the different religious exercises in the college

chapel were also required. The Bible was in the building, in three large volumes, containing full notes or expositions. These were kept under particular care, none of the younger students being allowed to open them, unless by special permission, when the priest was there to give the correct interpretations thereof.

There were times when the young priest loathed his surroundings and himself. At such times he did not fear to express his contempt, though, of course, somewhat guardedly.

The Superiors, realizing their weak hold on the youth, and realizing his value to themselves, made light of his "pretended insubordination." In the class room freedom of speech, on his part, was allowed, such as would be permitted from no other. The young man, fully aware of this toleration, took for himself all such advantages. Frequent discussions, like the following, occurred:

"Is it true, Father, that there is no salvation outside of the Roman Catholic Church?"

"Truth, indeed, my son!"

"And why?"

"Because without divine faith no salvation is possible, and as divine faith is to

be found alone in the Roman Catholic Church, therefore salvation is possible only in the Roman Catholic Church."

"Then can not a Protestant be saved?"

"No, because they have no faith in the teaching of the Holy Church; indeed, they reject all her doctrines, therefore salvation to them is impossible. And more, they are not willing to confess their sins to the priest, therefore their sins shall not be forgiven; how, then, can they be saved?"

"Another question, Father; the Protestants say the Bible is the Word of God, and they freely distribute the book for all to read. Is the Bible the Word of God? And if so, why does the Roman Catholic Church prohibit its reading?"

"Yes, the Bible is the holy Word of God, but here again the Protestants show their wicked audacity by freely circulating it. The Bible was not prepared or intended for the laity. It was intrusted to the holy fathers, by the apostles, to be kept by them and by them to be interpreted. Because of its much obscenity, it is not a fit book for women or children, and because of its much obscurity, it can not be understood by the common people. It can only be read to them by the priest who can rightly explain its meaning."

"Then the Bible is not a necessary book?"

"No, the Bible is not necessary. Were it to be entirely destroyed from the face of the earth, it would not matter. The Holy Church, by revelations, and traditions, has all the necessary truth, and by faith in the truth which she teaches, is salvation found. Thy questions savor of heresy and blasphemy. Thou hast had knowledge of these pestilential Protestants and their teachings. Avoid these heretics; they are an unholy sect, following the teachings of their leader and originator, Martin Luther, that licentious monk, who broke from the Holy Church because he wished to marry."

"Then is it a sin to marry?"

"It is a sin for a priest to marry. Celibacy is a more perfect state than that of marriage, and the priest is the example of that which is the most perfect. That is one of the great sins of the Protestant. By his unholy life he encourages polygamy and concubinage!"

"Does he encourage it more than the impure priest in his secret immoral life?" asked the young man, a blaze in his eyes.

"Cease thy blasphemy!" retorted the old priest, turning upon him.

"Yet one more question!" interrupted the young man, restraining himself.

"Is it true that in the sacrifice of the holy mass, the body of Christ exists literally, flesh and blood?"

"It is true, because the Church so teaches."

"Then I pray thee explain still further. The other day when Father A—— was offering the holy mass, he dropped a holy wafer on the floor. It was not taken up. A few hours later I had occasion to return to the altar, when on looking on the floor, where had fallen the piece of bread, I saw the ants carrying it off in crumbs. Would that have been permitted to the literal flesh of Christ?"

"Enough!" and with a frown and a stamp of the foot the caviling young priest was dismissed.

CHAPTER. VI.

JUAN.

The missionary meantime, had been obliged to seek another house, the owner refusing longer to rent to the Protestante.

"This is a part of our life and work here," said the good man to his wife. "By moving to different parts of the town, we learn to know the people and they us, thus removing deep fear and prejudice." There had, thus far, been no open attack upon the life of the missionary; and insults, threats, difficulty in obtaining needed help or frequent inability to purchase needed supplies, he looked upon as matters of small import.

"To wait and to win" had become his motto. Still he knew the cunning watchfulness of the priests, and while he prayed and waited he watched.

As the years passed, fear and prejudice were breaking down, and the room fitted up for preaching services was filled. The listeners were mostly from the humble class, for they were less watched and fol-

lowed by priests. And of such were also the Master's disciples of old.

Juan, the long time servant in the house of Valentino since the night when he stood and listened, with the boy and the girl, under the window, had continued his attendance. Fearlessly now, he entered and sat among the rest. The little book, the New Testament, which he had found upon the dead monk's bosom, he kept close by him. He had, at first, feared to open the forbidden book. But as he read, the spirit of God which hovers round the searcher for the truth illumined and made plain its meaning. He loved to read his Bible and he loved to listen to its teachings as given by the missionary.

The new, warm love burning within him could not be hid. He carried its brightness into other hearts; first into the hearts of his two friends, Pepe and his wife, the servants of the Senora de Corona, Elena's mother. The Senora de Corona and the Senora de Valentino knew that their servants were being drawn toward the new doctrine of the Protestants. But their servants were as indispensable to them as were the roofs that covered their heads. Therefore, as they received no word from the priests to dismiss these servants they chose to ignore the matter.

But the missionary knew that the time had come when the few tried and true must be called out into a visible church of Christ. Old Juan, Pepe, his wife and a few others were to be received into church membership. It was at a preparatory service, and the room was full of listeners, many there from curiosity. They had sung:

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow thee."

"Brothers," said the missionary, standing before them. "You know that Jesus, when here upon earth, called his own to follow him. Many left home and lands to be with their Master.

"He, just as truly, calls us to-day to follow him. You may not need to leave home and lands. Yet you know what it will mean, here in Mexico, to follow him. You know also that he said: 'He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.' But he says, too: 'Whoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven.' You know what it will mean here to confess him before men. Some-

times it means the giving up of all that life holds dear. Sometimes it means the giving up of life itself. God grant it may not mean such to any of you, but it will mean the giving up of friends, of employment and perhaps of homes. But then, listen!" added the missionary, a glad light in his voice. "Listen! Do we fear? Nay, rather we say: 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?'

"I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Can we say this, my friends?"

"Amen!" was the low spoken but heartfelt reply of each.

The service, on the Sunday following, was a quiet but impressive one. But that night, on returning to his home, his mistress called her servant Juan into her room. "I am told that this day thou didst identify thyself with the Protestantes. Is it true?"

"The Senora has heard aright," was the quiet but respectful reply.

"Art thou aware that by thus doing

thou hast forfeited the shelter of this, thy home?"

"Yes, Senora," said the old man.

"But surely, Juan, thou hast not considered! Think of this to-night, and to-morrow morning come and tell me thou dost repent."

But, on the morrow, neither threats nor persuasion could avail. The old man tried to tell his well-loved mistress of the glad, new life that was his. But she dared not listen, and though there were tears in her eyes, she turned from her service her well-trying and faithful servant, because the priest had so commanded and she must obey.

But news of what had been done had come to Rudolfo in his school. The mother did not know, neither did the priest know, that the young man sought out his faithful Juan and secured for him a little house on the outskirts of the town, where he could live with his friends, Pepe and wife, who also had been turned from home. Rudolfo knew that it would be difficult for Juan to obtain work. He left money with him saying: "Do not fear, my Juan. Thou hast ever cared for me, and now I will care that thou dost not suffer. Tell me when thou art in need!"

"Oh, young master!" said the old man,

"ever kind and true! Yet thou dost lack the one thing. Come thou also and confess Christ. Leave that false life!"

"Perhaps, after a while, later on, when I am older!" said the young man gaily.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WORD OF GOD.

It was a little adobe house of two low rooms. They were unplastered, the uncovered rafters overhead roughly hewn. The floor was the ground, but it was hard, smooth and well swept. In the little enclosed back yard walked an old woman, singing in a low voice. This corral was her kitchen, and she was preparing the noon meal. She stooped over the little charcoal fire on the ground, placing on the coals her flat earthen griddle, on which she was to bake her tortillas (corn cakes). She was enveloped, head and shoulders, in her rebozo (long cotton shawl). She had just seated herself on the ground, and drawn to herself the flat stone on which the corn is ground, when the street door opened and in walked a slender girl of near eighteen years.

"Queridita! Alma mia!" exclaimed the old woman rising, approaching the girl, and taking one little hand between her own. "Are all well at home? And where is Sara?" The girl wore no hat to remove, but she let fall over her shoulders her

long black lace veil with which her head had been enveloped, and sat down upon the little stool.

"Mamacita is well," was the reply, "and Sara has gone on to her brothers. She will call for me in an hour!" Sara was the maid, for no girl of the better class is allowed to walk the street unaccompanied by mother, friend or maid.

The girl was Elena, and the old woman was her nurse, who had been turned from her home. Elena watched as she molded bits of the dough, patting and flattening them into thin cakes, and then with her fingers deftly turning them on the heated griddle. "And now a tortilla for me!" laughed the girl, as she took one steaming from the pile, and the old nurse hurried to bring the only dishes, that the girl might have a taste of her frijoles and a sip of her black coffee.

"It is good to be with you again, dear old Nanita!" exclaimed the girl impulsively.

"And how lonely I am without thy beautiful face, and how I wish I might see the dear Madracita!" replied the old woman. "Thy mother was always good to me, and I had a happy home there."

Elena's mother had parted very unwillingly from her faithful servants. She

knew that her daughter occasionally saw her old nurse; indeed, she sometimes sent by her some present, but she did not know that her daughter frequently stayed long and talked with the old nurse; for Sara, the maid, loved her young mistress, and would reveal nothing. "And now, Alma Mia, before you go, read to me again from my little book. I wish I could read those words myself, but after you have gone I say them over and over again, when about my work, or when awake at night—those beautiful words!"

The little Bible was taken from its niche in the wall where it was kept, carefully wrapped up in a cloth. The girl took the book and read. "In my father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you!"

And so the two sat, and read and talked, the girl fresh and beautiful in her young life, and the old woman sitting on the floor by her side, holding between her brown, wrinkled palms one soft little hand. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there you may be also."

"I must go now, for there is Sara knocking at the door, and Juan and Pepe will soon be here for their dinner."

"Querida, how I thank thee for coming to see me. How I wish you could go with me to hear the Protestant preacher talk and sing to us of Jesus and of heaven."

"I wish I could go. But I dare not. I often think of that time when Rudolfo and I listened to him. Poor Rufo, he is so changed! But there is a change in me, too. You, Nanita, and that little book, are changing me, somehow."

Elena was seated one afternoon in the garden amid her flowers. The piece of embroidery lay idly in her lap, for she was thinking—thinking of what had been coming into her life the past few months since she had been talking and reading to her old nurse from God's own Book. She was wishing that she dared talk to her mother about it, and that she could go to hear the missionary again. Her thoughts were arrested by the words of her father and mother, talking in a room near by.

"Your husband is no longer your confidant," she heard him say. "Another has taken my place!"

"Why! what can you mean!" was the reply. "You have always had the first place!"

"Yes, perhaps the first place, in some respects," was the cold answer, "but cer-

tainly not the first place in your heart. Senora, let us not waste words. You and I both know that another has come in between us, and that other is your priest. To him you go for direction and for comfort. Your confidence no longer reposes in your husband."

"But," faltered the woman, "you know our Holy Church tells us to go to our priest for our instruction and guidance. I must obey! What else can I do?"

"Do! This you can do—you can give up your confessional. No longer shall your priest steal from you your secrets, your heart! I will not have it! Again I say, you must choose between your priest and your husband!"

The woman was weeping. "You are cruel! You ask of me what I can not do!" But the man angrily closed the door behind him.

Elena's mother came out into the corridor. These were not their first words on the subject. She knew that his anger would pass and she would still continue at the confessional. He, too, knew, alas! that there was no other way. His wife, as did the other wives, would still go to their confessional, and he must submit.

As the mother drew near, Elena exclaimed:

"Oh, mother dear, I heard what you were saying, and father is right. Let us not go to confess any more!" The woman started, then turned angrily.

"And who art thou to dictate thus! Art thou wiser and better than our Mother Church, which commands us to confess to our priest!"

"But, oh, mother," called the girl, "I am not to tell you what to do, but please do not make me go another time to confess!"

"And why not?"

"Because I can not go, mother. The last time I was there I vowed in my heart never to go again, but I dared not tell you."

"But why? I ask again!" demanded the mother.

The girl was crying now. "You know, mother. I need not tell you," she faltered. "I can not tell you the questions he asks of me. The words he speaks to me I blush to hear. The thoughts he gives to me I hate!"

The mother looked earnestly into the beautiful innocent face of her daughter. She could not speak for a moment. Then she said:

"It must be a mistake! The priest is a holy man, and he could only say to you

pure words. He can not mean to say to you what is harmful. But I will talk to him and tell him he must be careful. And, Elena, my child, do not speak of this to any one, especially to thy father, and I will tell the priest to be more careful!"

"Oh, mother, listen to me! I have learned that it is wrong to confess to a man. Only God is able to hear and to forgive!"

"What!" said the woman, "that is heresy. Where hast thou learned such? Has Rudolfo, or has thy nurse been poisoning thy young heart? We will attend to this!"

And the mother hastened away, unwilling to listen to further words from her daughter.

Elena was still sadly thinking and wondering, when there came a step along the corridor, to her side, and before her stood Rudolfo. He placed a chair for himself while she drew up her work.

"So occupied that thou hast not even one word for me!"

Her eyes were on her work. "Elena, it is a long time since we two used to play here together. Thou wast beautiful then, but far more beautiful now!"

She quickly looked up at him, anger now in those gentle eyes.

"How darest thou talk thus to me? Thou, so soon to be a priest?"

"As innocent as ever, sweet maid," laughed the young man, and then, in changed and sober tone, he added, "and didst thou think in truth I am to be a priest? Bah! I hate them all. I am only waiting for the opportune moment to leave them and return to life and thee!"

Astonished, she said, "And thou, Rudolfo, hast been deceiving us, mother, priests and all?"

"Call it thus if thou dost like. I am only learning their own art. They are deceiving us! But I must except one priest: Father Antonio is true and good and honest I went there against my will to please my mother. I have remained longer than I thought, because—because—well—because I knew not just how to escape—and, well, because I am suited there in some ways. But yes, Elena, I am living a life of deceit. I am a hypocrite and a coward. But I will soon leave."

"Rufo," said the girl, "do you remember how you used to talk to me about the missionary, and do you remember that night you took me with you to hear him talk and sing? I have been thinking about it this afternoon. The Protestants are right. I wish I knew them better, for

I love their teachings and their book, the Bible. But thou art so changed. Thou art not the same Rufo."

"Yes," said the young man bitterly, "I know you all think so. But at heart I am not changed."

He stood upon his feet. "Elena, I am the same. I must go now, but remember, to you I have not changed. And whatever happens, do not forget or hate me, Querida."

CHAPTER VIII.

DANGER.

Rudolfo had occasion to pass, one evening after dark, the passage leading into the back court of the Bishops' School. The door was closed, but he heard voices on the other side. He stood a moment, without special thought, when suddenly his attention was arrested by the words of the Father Superior.

"Sin! It is no sin! On the contrary, it will be a very commendable deed! Why, man, it will be a very meritorious deed! Everything which threatens the safety of our most Holy Church must be removed. And this doctrine threatens and is spreading. Think! Would you not do all in your power to remove from us some deadly disease? and this doctrine is worse than a deadly disease, for it destroys both body and soul. And to reach this danger, the leader of this sect, the propagator of this pernicious faith must be removed! And whosoever shall do this act for the safety of the Holy Church shall be forever blessed, here and hereafter. Think, man, of the indulgences such a deed will obtain!"

"Yes, Father," replied an unknown voice. "Yes! But at the same time, thou knowest it is a dangerous and a difficult thing that thou and the Church dost ask. So dangerous and difficult that a lifetime of indulgence will not be sufficient recompense!"

"Then, man, a large sum of money shall be added. The Church is ready to grant full and generous recompense for all done in her behalf. Name the sum!"

"Three hundred dollars, Father."

"Impossible, man! The deed does not warrant such extravagance!"

After some haggling the sum of two hundred dollars was agreed upon. "And now," continued the priest, "as to the opportune time. It is now. To-morrow! He is out of town. Up in the hills among the mines. His return road into the city will be through the south gate. This road is but little traveled and leads through the 'arroyo' where are the thickets. But you can plan the details, only remember this: The sooner the better, and as soon as accomplished come to me and the two hundred dollars is yours!"

The young man, Rudolfo, stood riveted to the spot. Too well he understood the meaning of that conversation. His natural impetuosity was about to open the

door upon them, when some power seemed to restrain him, and he turned as if to flee from the spot. Only a few steps distant, the door suddenly opened and the priest, accompanied by two men in common clothes, walked hurriedly past him. The priest turned, paused a moment, his face toward the young man as if about to speak.

Later that evening Rudolfo was called into the private room of the priest, who looked searchingly into his face, only to meet a steady gaze, and there was scorn in that look.

"Thou wast in the court as I passed through?" asked the father.

"Yes, Father."

"Didst thou hear aught of the words said?"

"Not a word, Father!" The He was spoken very calmly and deliberately.

Again the priest looked searchingly into the young man's face, but nothing was revealed.

"It was nothing, son. Two men were speaking on a private matter of personal importance to themselves. I called thee, son, to secure thy assistance in the classroom next week. Thou dost know that the new class in church history is a large one, and the instructor has his hands more

than full. Canst thou assist him to-morrow and this week?"

"I will think about it." Rudolfo retired to his room, but not to sleep. Well, too well, he understood the meaning of that transaction within the inner court. A price was set on the head of the missionary. That man whom he loved and respected. It had been years since he had talked with him, but how well he remembered the conversation when a boy, the missionary's kind face and smile and words. He had occasionally seen him on the street, but not to talk to him. Through the hours of the night the young man lay thinking. "The missionary must not die, and I must save him." His plans were made. While students and servants were busy about the early morning occupations he passed unnoticed into the street.

Late that afternoon the missionary was returning home, driving slowly in his little cart over the dry, dusty plain. He had been spending several days up among the mines. His cart had been filled with Bibles and papers which had all been given away while preaching, singing and talking to the miners.

And now the long, wearisome ride home. But it was almost over now; far off in the distance he could see the western sun re-

flected on cathedral walls and spires. But he needs must hasten, for night was fast coming on, and it would be dark ere he pass over the "arroyo" with its heavy mesquite thickets. He was rounding a big pile of boulders and rocks, when his horse suddenly started, nearly overturning the cart. At the same moment a figure suddenly appeared from behind the boulders; an old man dressed in working clothes, his old straw hat down over his eyes and tied by a cloth under the chin.

The missionary never carried weapons. He always said they would be no defense, rather a disadvantage, and he noticed that the man carried no weapon. Stepping quickly to the side of the cart, speaking hurriedly, he said:

"Senor, do not go down through the arroyo! Men are there waiting to kill you! Believe me. I speak the truth. No matter how I know. Ask no questions, but do as I tell you. Turn here, retrace your way to the hacienda morena—and there take the way around by the traveled road into town. It will be very late in the night before you reach home, but better so than to pass through the arroyo! And hereafter be on the watch wherever you go, for your life is in danger!"

The missionary hesitated. It would so

belate him to retrace his way so many miles, but something in the old man compelled him to obey.

"God reward thee, my friend, for thus coming to warn me! Tell me thy name, old man, or am I mistaken, thy appearance is that of an old man, but thy voice and thine eyes belong to one of younger years! Tell me thy name!"

"No matter, Senor—I am a friend. I knew of this danger and have been lying behind these rocks since noon, for I knew not when you would pass this way."

"At least get in here with me and return to the town, for I see you are on foot."

"No, I can not ride with you. But turn quickly and go. Adios!" And as suddenly as he appeared, so suddenly he disappeared behind the rocks.

As the good man retraced his weary way, thanking God for his deliverance, he wished that he might know who had been his deliverer. A strange old man. What was it that made him think of Rudolfo—his boy friend of years before? How he had loved him and yearned for him! How he grieved when they told him that Rudolfo had entered the training school for priests! Poor boy, was he to be lost?

Was the good man's faith growing faint?

The same great love which guided the steps of the missionary and turned them from death was watching over this blinded, misguided youth, and was yet to lead him into paths of safety and right.

It was past the retiring hour in the college. The doorkeeper waited to close the heavy street door. And yet he knew that his favorite, the young man Rudolfo, was not yet within, and he continued to wait.

"Why is not the door closed?" called the priest on his nightly walk through the corridor. "Close it, I tell thee."

"Yes, Father," was the obedient reply. The heavy door was swinging when there was a hurried step on the pavement without, and the young priest Rudolfo stepped in.

"Where hast thou been all day?" demanded the priest, turning upon him.

"With my mother!" They faced each other a moment. Both knew the lie. "Remain in thy room to-morrow till I send for thee!"

The young priest had never been subjected to punishment as had other students. Well aware of that fact he had but little fear. The excitement and fatigue produced a long, sound sleep. His imprisonment gave opportunity for the longer

rest. About noon he was called into the presence of the father. His manner of the night before had undergone a change.

With a kind smile and mild tone the priest began.

"My son, thou dost know how well thou art loved and how thou art privileged as no other here. How it has grieved me to hear thy deliberate falsehood of last night. Why didst thou lie to me?"

"Perhaps because I have so well learned that art since coming here!" replied the young man in tones equally bland.

"I had thought last night to visit upon thee deserving punishment!" replied the priest, frowning. "But I have decided to leave thee with thine own conscience. But hereafter thou art not free to come and go as thou hast done. True, thou hast always been required to obtain the leave of absence from the building, but we have so far always trusted thee to such an extent that thy errand has never been asked. But hereafter remember, that whenever it becomes necessary to grant to thee permission for absence from the building, thy errand will also be required!"

The young man made no answer. "And one word more before thy departure!" The father was decidedly ill at ease, his

manner unlike the air of self-repose of the moment before.

"Dost thou know aught of the leader of the heretics? Hast thou communications with any of the sect?"

"I know naught of them," was the reply.

CHAPTER IX.

DECEIVED.

"And so the girl is quite stubborn, is she!" So said the man within the confessional to his penitent, the mother of Elena. "And hast thou done all in thy power, daughter?"

"Oh, yes, Father!" sobbed the woman.

"Well," continued the man, "then it is time for thy priest to help. She refuses to come to mass, to come to the confessional, she insists on attendance upon the services of the heretics and she pretends to read her Bible alone, unaided by her priest. Her soul indeed is in great danger. But do not despair, daughter! I have a plan. She shall yet be saved! She must be removed at once from the pernicious influence of these heretics. This thou dost clearly see, daughter! But I know a safe retreat. In the school of the Sisters Angelina she will be sheltered, and in time the seeds of heresy sown in her heart will die for lack of nourishment.

"Now the stage leaves to-morrow morn for the school, and thou must be the one to carry her thence. I will give thee a

letter of introduction to the Sisters, that they may know how to meet the case. But, daughter, there must be all haste. Thou must surely go to-morrow, and there must be all secrecy lest the girl escape us. Tell her that thou art suddenly summoned to the dying bed of some old friend and that thou dost need her assistance. Tell her anything that will take her with thee. Of course the Holy Church does frown upon deceptions. But this is not deception. All means are fair that will save an immortal soul from destruction. I know it is a hard thing for thee to do, daughter, but thou wilt not fail! It will be worth the cost, the saving of thy child!"

The man paused to breathe. He did not add what was in his thoughts, that there had been brewing in his mind for some time a plan for the removal of this fair maid. For there had been whispers of late that there was danger that the Church would lose the young priest Rudolfo because of this same girl.

The mother tearfully promised and went her way. She, with a mother's heart, a mother's love. But before love, before honor even, must be obedience to the voice of her priest.

It was all over. The girl was safe

under lock and key in the "Sister's Refuge." Elena knew that she had been deceived by mother and by priest. She knew, too, that when father and mother forsook, the Lord would take her up. She had been searched. Her little Bible had been taken from her, but, ah! they could not search her heart and take from thence the treasure hid.

Solitude, cold, hunger, threats and punishment could not draw from that once timid girl the words "I recant." And though the convent walls were thick and cold and dark, the heavenly hope filled her soul with warmth and light. And peace and courage, God's gifts to his children, were hers.

Months had passed. The mysterious disappearance of Elena, the beautiful daughter of Corona, had ceased to be a subject of public speculation. Her mother's face had grown sad, her steps slow. Did she know aught of her daughter that she would not reveal? And the young priest Rudolfo, what of him? When the girl had first disappeared, in his desperation he had boldly sought her. Little did he care, though men wondered and jeered. It was even rumored that Elena was secreted in the house of the Protestant priest, and thither he went in his

search. The good man told him how his heart waited and yearned for his salvation, but to the young man, then, there seemed no interest, no thought save to find his lost Elena. All his search had been in vain. He determined then to leave the college, to renounce his priesthood. But the knowledge of his unfitness for any occupation in business, forced him to hesitate. Even his own mother would probably refuse to receive him again. High life, in Mexico, is in natural enmity to manual labor, and his training for the priesthood in no way gave him a taste for work. He knew not what to do—where to go. There seemed nowhere else. Thus it was that the passing weeks and months still found him there, unhappy, restless. The father superior was confident that with Elena removed from his sight and thoughts the young man would in time submit to the career before him. But as time passed and no news came of the lost girl, the young man grew silent, sullen and despairing.

CHAPTER. X.

FAITHFUL.

"One of those despicable heretics has been brought in hither, and cast into that little empty back room. That room that used to be the cell of the 'old crazy monk'. He has been in there a day and a night. They think to make him recant, but those heretics are a stubborn lot."

Thus spoke one of a group of students standing in the college court yard. The young Rudolfo was approaching the group and his blood was stirred at the words.

"Who put him there?" he asked sharply.

"By order of the priest, methinks, or better, by order of the Holy Church," said one.

"Art thou perchance interested in this dog of a heretic?" sneered another. Rudolfo had never entered that little back room since he used to meet his uncle there. He avoided the place, but now he walked quickly across the yard. The door was closed. He stood without a few moments, but heard no sound, and concluded that the prisoner had been released. Rudolfo was occupied through the day, for

he had completed his course of instruction and in a short time was to enter upon the duties of a fully equipped priest. But as night came on his sleep was troubled. In dreams he seemed again a boy, kneeling by his uncle's dying bed and listening to the words of Felipe. Then he heard the missionary saying:

"Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him also will I confess before my Father which is in heaven."

"But whosoever shall deny me before men, him also will I deny before my Father which is in heaven."

And now he thought of Juan, his mother's faithful old servant, and how he pleaded with his young master to confess his Savior.

"Poor old Juan!" thought the young priest, aroused from his dreams. "My faithful old Juan! I had well nigh forgotten thee! But I will make amends and soon look thee up again!"

The next morning as Rudolfo was coming out from early mass in the chapel, he heard loud voices in the back court. A crowd had pushed in through the back gate and others were entering. The old prisoner had been dragged into the yard.

"He will not recant! Then let the dog die!"

"Let him feel first the touch of the lash! Mayhap that will quicken his thoughts!"

Down on the ground was an old man kneeling, stripped to the waist, his hands fastened behind him. Above him stood one with uplifted hand holding a scourge, a forbidden instrument now, but nevertheless kept by the most Holy Church to use, in secret, whenever the occasion demands.

The young man stood a moment at a distance, as he saw and heard blow after blow fall and tear the bare flesh. No sound escaped the prisoner. This seemed the more to madden the mob. One drew near and threw a heavy stone. Another, with a savage kick, threw the old man forward upon his face.

"He is dead!" cried one.

"Have mercy! spare the gray hairs!" came a voice from the crowd.

At this moment Rudolfo rushed to the center. The old man lay upon the ground, his face turned toward him. One look at that prostrate form and into that face and the young priest leaped like an infuriated beast.

"Juan!" he cried. "My old Juan! Diablos! Por Dios cease!"

He leaned over the fallen man to raise

him. The crowd had drawn back a moment. Then one called. "Take him, too. He is one of them. A traitor! Let him die too!"

The young man sprang to his feet and faced the angry mob, his eyes blazing and every nerve quivering. His voice was strange as he cried:

"Touch me who dares!"

But no one dared. Then a sudden silence fell, for in through the gate and through the crowd walked the missionary. He was silent as he stood before them, but there was something in that stern gaze that no one cared to meet, and one by one the crowd fell back.

"Bring water!" he said, as he stooped and with his knife cut the cords, and then with his handkerchief bathed the face and head of the unconscious man. And then he looked to see who was supporting in his arms the old man. The eyes of the two met for a moment, but no word was said.

From his concealment walked forth the priest, who had instigated the deed, but wisely kept himself from view.

"And what dost thou here, leader of the heretics? Begone!"

"I go when I take my brother with me!" was the fearless reply.

Then stood the missionary upon his feet, and turning to the crowd:

"Is it thus that ye take the law within your own hands? Ye, a law-professing people! But you are the one responsible!" turning to the priest, "and justice will be meted out for you! God's justice never falls!"

"Take the carcass of the dog with you and begone!" angrily said the man in the black robe as he disappeared from view. The crowd began to scatter, some with angry threats and muttered insults, some with merry ridicule. But one came and helped the missionary and the young priest, as together they carried the man, now regaining consciousness, into the street, and lifted him into the hack which they had called. Faithfully, these two, in the house of the missionary, ministered to their suffering friend. But he had not long to suffer.

"Sit near me, young master, and read me once more these words."

The young priest opened and read:

"And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

"Dear young master," whispered the old man slowly, "this little book you now hold

was the one your uncle held in death. He bequeathed to you his little crucifix. I now bequeath to you my Bible. May it lead you and keep you till we meet again, young master!"

CHAPTER XI.

RELEASED.

Rudolfo had scarce refrained himself before the suffering, dying Juan. But when all was over his wrath could find no words.

"Oh, senor! I hate them! I hate them! The cruel deceivers! I would fight them! Will you not send to your country, for your people are strong, and bring men here, and we will drive them from among us?"

"My kingdom is not of this world, for then would my servants fight," responded the quiet voice.

"My father said there would be battles to fight for Mexico, and I am ready to begin. Oh, that I might destroy them!" cried the excited young man.

"Yes, even now is the battle waging. It is between wrong and right, but the weapons are not carnal.

"The armor of God is this:

"Your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all—taking

the shield of faith—and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.’

“Are you ready to put on this armor, my young friend?”

For a moment the two looked into each other’s eyes. Was there something that spoke from the soul of one to the soul of the other, for the missionary loved the boy, and the proud young man, for the first time, knew his master.

“No, senor, I am not ready yet; I am not worthy yet,” came the reply in humbled tone.

“What are you going to do now, my boy?” The question aroused the young man. He raised his head, for with that question had come the knowledge of his release. He knew now that he was free. He knew that he could no longer return to the college. He knew that he would not be received there. He knew that his mother even would refuse to receive him.

“Your home is here with us, until you choose to find another,” said the kind voice.

“I will go first and see if my mother will listen to me.”

Meantime, the missionary went to ascertain whether the law could be meted out to those murderers. But nothing was done.

Punishment of the offenders was promised, but they could not be found. He sought permission to place the wrong before the public, through the press, but this was refused.

Rudolfo found his mother much broken. She had heard the story.

"To think that I should live to have this disgrace brought upon me! And by my own son! Oh, the shame, the shame!"

"Shame!" cried the young man hotly, "shame! Then it is no shame that your brother, my old uncle, was defrauded of all, that our own home was taken from us? No shame that all has gone from us on the false pretense of liberating my father's soul from purgatory? And is it no shame that our faithful Juan was banished and now cruelly put to death? Oh, mother, my mother, how can we who have lived these years under this tyranny that knows no shame, how can we talk of shame? I have been living in intimacy now with the priests of our Church, and I can prove to you its falseness!"

Then the young man controlled himself and in subdued tones told his mother about the sufferings of their faithful Juan, about his last words and about what the missionary had told him. He told her that he was now about to identify himself with

the Protestants, and begged her to come with him.

The proud, beautiful woman wept, but said, "No, son, it can not be! We have not been deceived. Thou art the deluded one! Thy soul will go to destruction and thou wouldst take me with thee!"

"Mother!" again cried out the young man. "The Church of Rome is responsible for the—shall I say death—at least the disappearance of Elena!"

Then the mother said: "Then if you loved Elena, how didst thou reconcile that with thy intention to become a priest?"

"Ah, mother, that was the worst of all! I was deceiving you all. I went there first to please you, mother. But I never did intend to become a priest until Elena was taken from me, and then in my despair I had about yielded myself! But now I am free. God will forgive, and my life shall be a warning to others!"

There was silence for a while. Then the mother said:

"Then you must choose between me and disgrace! I have no son who is a heretic!"

"If you say so, I will choose, mother, between you and—not disgrace—but Jesus. As you say, mother!"

Rudolfo went to his own room. His lit-

the trunk was there. It had been sent home from the college. He gathered up his few belongings and placed them in his trunk. His uncle's crucifix he still wore on his bosom, under his garments. He took it from him and placed it in the trunk. The New Testament, the gift of dying Juan, he placed by its side.

It was not the same proud, self-secure young man, who later presented himself at the home of the missionary. Rather, it was the face of one who had met his foe and the struggle still on.

"You are welcome," said the good man with that quiet, reassuring smile of his. "You know even the Son of God, when on earth, had not where to lay his head."

"I have enlisted, senor," said the young man. "I am ready for the fight, but I know not which way to turn." The tone was low and humble.

"I know all about it, my young friend. It is so because you are fighting alone! But you need not battle alone! Your Captain is waiting only for you to call him to your side!"

"Teach me how, senor!"

Then how lovingly the missionary pointed out the way, straight to Jesus. Together they kneeled, and both called for help.

When they arose there was a new look in that face—a new light in those eyes. Both knew that the surrender had been made. There was no need for words, for such joy needeth no human speech.

CHAPTER XII.

FOUND.

Rudolfo was now occupied with new studies—new studies that unfolded wonderful things. The young man was the missionary's companion, and together they walked the streets, or traveled to other villages to teach and preach.

But often his heart turned toward his lost Elena. If he only could tell her that now he shared her joy and hope!

And had his instructors in college dropped him out of mind? By no means!

One day, a former friend and classmate suddenly came upon him in the street. "Amigo, I have been seeking opportunity to give thee warning! Take it. For thy life is hunted by thy former instructors! Flee, I tell thee!"

But with his characteristic fearlessness the young man paid little heed. He had heard other threats. So the next day Rudolfo entered, as he frequently did, a little lunching room.

With the last course his coffee was brought. Instantly another waiter entered and swiftly removed the cup. Amid

the loud talk and joking going on at other tables, the waiter again came to his side. Handing him another cup of coffee he hurriedly whispered. "There was poison in that cup! Do not enter here again! And if you value your life, escape from this town!"

Rudolfo told the missionary. "Yes," said the good man, "I have been aware that thy life is in danger, and I have made arrangement for thee to go away for a while, to our school of preparation for the ministry. There thou wilt learn, and be safe, at least till danger here has passed."

The missionary accompanied him part way, when by train he went to the central part of Mexico. Here he was welcomed by fellow countrymen, who were preparing for usefulness in their own land. He was happy in his new surroundings, but often, across it all, there fell a shadow. His mother, alone and unhappy, if she only could be with him! And Elena, his beautiful one! Oh, if he could know where she was!

A few days later an errand took him into the other part of the town where was a Protestant boarding school for girls. As he neared the gateway he saw several girls standing. Even at that distance the outline and movements of one of them at-

tracted his attention. Suddenly his heart gave a joyous bound, for before him he saw his lost Elena.

The girl turned, looked, and cried out, "Rufo! Oh, Rufo! Can it be!"

"Elena, my own lost one! Tell me, I pray thee!"

Instinctively the other girls withdrew. "I can not tell you all now. Some other time I will. I was deceived, and carried to the Sisters Angelina's school. But I was there only a short time. My Heavenly Father granted me speedy release. One morning, the sister, who had come to see me at early dawn, to learn whether I would recant, left the door open. I think she intended to return at once. Day was just beginning to break. The hall was still dark, but I fled through an open door into the court, and found the back gate unlocked, for the servant had just passed. New strength was given me, and I ran and ran, not knowing whether I was pursued or not. There was scarce any person on the street. At last I reached an open door where stood a foreign lady. I felt somehow that she would protect me. I fell before her, but she raised and led me within, and though she could not talk with me, her husband came, who understood my words.

"They kept me, so good and kind to me were they. I was sick for a long time. And after I recovered they sent me here. I have been very happy, but so often think of my mother. I have written to her several times since coming here, but receive no reply. Tell me of her!"

Then he told her what he knew, briefly, of all that had happened since their separation.

"You have changed!" each said to the other. The girl was dawning into beautiful womanhood, the lines of sadness in that sweet face making it all the more lovely; and he, as handsome as ever, but with the flash of his black eyes under control, and a look of quiet repose upon the strong face.

* * * * *

Years have passed; they have both completed their course of study and are once again in their own old home. There are two old ladies who do not hesitate to say that the bright black-eyed little boy is their "grandson." Indeed, the little one does not know which "grandma" or which home is the best.

But Elena and Rudolfo are only home for a visit. Their work is elsewhere, but Rudolfo says he has a message for his old friends and townspeople.

The rented house of the missionary, with its best room for the preaching service, has now given place to the neat little chapel, and this evening it is Rudolfo, the young preacher, who is gathering a crowd, for he has by no means been forgotten.

"Friends," he said, "you all know me—the once ardent, reckless boy, who sold himself to the priesthood. I knew not myself then. But God has revealed himself to me, and he has shown me myself, what I am to him, and what I may do for him. The years that God shall grant to me must be given to this work—to showing to you the same wonderful way that has been made plain to me.

"My old uncle, dying, bequeathed to me the crucifix he had worn upon his bosom. His life was a sacrifice to the crucifix. Friends, our own land, our Mexico, long has been a sacrifice to the crucifix—the crucifix we see upon our altars, upon our walls, upon our temple spires. We wear them upon our bosoms, beautiful, golden crucifixes. But, oh, how heavy they have grown, till we are sinking, sinking, crushed beneath their weight. Let us arise! Let us throw their weight from us! It is not the crucifix we need, but the cross—the cross of Christ. Oh, friends and neighbors, come with me! Let us

cease not to cry, to warn, to raise, all
over our Mexico, the fallen ones, and to
lead them not to the crucifix, but to the
cross of Christ!"

THE HERETICS
A STORY OF WESTERN MEXICO

By HARRIET CRAWFORD

THE HERETICS.

CHAPTER I.

DONA ALICIA AND HER TREASURES.

"Thou wilt watch most carefully, Lola, over these two! Do not allow them out of thy sight!"

Thus spake the Senora Alicia de Peralta to her maid, who was about to take in charge the little six-year-old twins, Mariana and Frederico.

They were to go to the Plaza, where every afternoon gathered a merry crowd; friends to meet, richly-dressed señoritas with their chaperons and novios (lovers) to promenade together, venders of dulces (sweets) and cooling drinks to press the throng, strangers to sit and watch, while, above all, floated strains of beautiful band music, now soft and low, now free and soul lifting, for the people of Mexico love and make true music.

Dona Alicia watched the trio fondly till they disappeared from sight, and well might she be proud of her own, for there were no lovelier children in all the city.

She herself was one of the loveliest of

women when, as a bride, Don Fernando Peralta had brought her, a few years before, from the Capital City to the new west of Mexico. Hers was the beauty and grace of high-born lineage, and hers the same dark, mournful Moorish eyes for which the women of her native Granada have always been famous.

Small wonder, then, that friends had declared they knew apart these lovely baby twins only by their eyes; Mariana's black and shining like stars, the boy Frederico's large and mournful like his mother's, but with such a look of questioning wonder in their depths that she was wont to exclaim as she gathered him in her arms, "Tell me, little son, only speak and tell me what thou wouldst know!"

The maid, Lola, too, loved her beautiful charges, but once down in the Plaza, seated under an oleander, her admiring and handsome Antonio by her side, holding her hand and whispering sly words of love in her ear, alas! she forgot the twins and their mother's parting admonition.

Frederico was safe, seated near the orchestra, filling his soul with the music that he so loved.

Mariana, beautiful in white dress and fluttering ribbons, was fitting from table

to stand trying to decide from which of the fruits and dulces to buy.

"This way, pretty one! Here is what you want," she heard, and, looking up, saw a woman, head and shoulders enveloped in her rebozo (cotton shawl). Her eyes alone were visible.

"Right over here are lovely sugar birds and flowers, too lifelike and sweet to eat, but not too sweet for thee, pretty one." At the same time she took the child by the hand and led her on.

It was only a moment's walk across the street, where she lifted the girl into her arms, wrapping about her the rebozo she wore. As Mariana struggled to free herself, the woman told her of lovely things they were soon to see. Once around the corner, she quickened her pace, running and talking the while. Into an alley she turned, and, lifting the door latch, entered a low adobe room.

The child began to scream. "Callate" ("Keep quiet") was roughly spoken.

An inner door was opened and a face peeped in.

"Go quickly," spoke the woman, "and send hither 'El mozo del Diabolo' (the devil's errand boy)."

"Mamma, oh, my mamma! Take me to my mamma!" cried the child.

"Yes, yes—thou shalt soon go, very soon," meanwhile swiftly removing ear and finger rings and a slender chain from which a cross was pendant.

"Dost wish to see thy mother, child? Yes—very soon—"

"But my rings—my golden cross that mamma gave me!"

"Chit, nina! Thy mother will give thee others!"

The door opened again and a man slouched in. His eyes were narrow and shifting, and he drew down his hat to cover from view an ugly scar across his temple.

At sight of him the girl screamed louder. "Valgame! This noise will never do! Vete!" exclaimed the woman. "Go and call Jose to take thy place. See thou that the horse be ready at once."

The screaming girl was told that if she did not stop that noise, she would not be carried to her mother. So, struggling with her sobs, she allowed herself to be lifted to the horse in front of a man who wrapped about her hood and cloak.

"If thou dost make one noise, I will not take thee home!" spoke the man in low tone, as they emerged from the corral into the street.

But the streets grew dirtier and nar-

rower, the houses smaller and far between, till at length they were upon a bare, dusty plain.

"My mamma," sobbed the girl. "You said you would take me to my mamma!"

"Callate, else I will kill thee right here!"

Several leagues were covered, the terrified child daring to make no noise, till the horse turned up toward the hills, entering a narrow canyon, where, following a path through the mesquite growth, they suddenly drew in before a shanty made of branches and grass.

A lean yellow dog lying in the doorway began to growl, only to be kicked aside by a couple of ill-appearing men with faces partly hid from view 'neath clouds of tobacco smoke.

A woman stepped from within and lifted the trembling child to the ground.

"My mother, oh, they promised to take me to my mother!" broke out again the girl.

"To-morrow, child! It be too late this day,—to-morrow! Maria Santissima! What a beauty! But how is this? Were there no jewels, Jose?"

Jose shrugged his shoulders, spat and said deliberately:

"Dona Petra might enlighten thee as to

that. I took the child as she was handed to me!"

"How happens it that thou hast done the carrying, and not 'El mozo del Diabolo'?"

"Quien sabe! Unless it be that this lady was not so well pleased with his looks as with mine. Quien sabe!"

"This richly-embroidered dress and under garments and shining bootees ill fit thy surroundings, child," said the woman, leading Mariana within the hut and removing clothes and shoes and replacing them with others, soiled and torn.

"To-morrow thou shalt have thy garments again and return to thy mother!"

"Those curls may be an undesirable mark," gruffly spoke out one of the men. At the same time, reaching up, he drew from the entwining branches of the wall a pair of shears which he handed to the woman.

Back in a shadowed corner of the room, all this time, there reclined upon a bed of rags, a lad of perhaps ten or twelve years, intently watching. He straightened up as the woman began to clip the black glossy curls.

"My hair! My curls! Papa's curls they are!" screamed the child. "Oh, do not cut them!"

At that instant, up sprang the boy, with blazing eyes, and, leaping across the room, with one swift blow he knocked the shears from the woman's hand.

"The devil is loose!" she screamed. One of the men burst into a coarse laugh, while the other, striding to the boy, seized him by the arm, and, drawing from his side a long knife, held it aloft.

"Kill me!" cried the boy. "But only cowards harm a beautiful little girl like this!"

Amid shouts of laughter the knife was replaced and the boy pushed back to his corner, while the curls were all removed. And now, in place of Mariana, the beautiful little daughter of Peralta, stood a ragged, shorn, tear-stained, trembling little creature whom even her own mother would not have known.

Scarce knowing what she did, she staggered toward the boy, and as none forbade her, fell down beside him.

"Do not cry, bonita," whispered the boy as he reached out and drew her to him. She clung to him, sobbing, "Mamma, oh, my mamma!"

"You will see mamma, I think, in a few days," he whispered again.

But night was creeping down the mountain side, over the canyon and hut, as if

to hide from view its cruelty and crime. On the ground, outside, still glowed the remnants of a few burning sticks of wood, and on these coals stood an earthen jar of atole (cornmeal gruel). The woman poured from it into an earthen cup, and carried it to the children.

"Drink, little one," said the boy, holding to her the cup. But she refused. "Yes, thou must drink! I want thee to. Thou must keep well to see mamma again!"

She took the cup and drank. "Now, do not be afraid! I will not let them hurt thee. Lie down and sleep." And he arranged more smoothly the bed of rags.

The embers burned out. The stars, one by one, awoke, peeping down through the openings in the roof. The owls called to each other up in the ravine, while further up was heard the cry of a coyote. . . . And through it all slept the hardened men and women, each wrapped in a blanket, lying upon the ground floor, across the doorway.

But the boy lay upon his couch of rags thinking—thinking. He could not sleep. He, too, had been stolen from home and fond parents. Several times he had attempted escape, but each time had been prevented. He knew not what was to be his fate, and from fright and resistance

he had grown into a sullen despair. But that night something new had come into his life. This little helpless creature, and he must arouse himself and become a man that he might protect her. And as the little fevered girl tossed and moaned in her sleep, sobbing, "Mamma, mamma," he reached up and laid his hand upon her.

CHAPTER II.

THE MOTHER OF GOD.

Meanwhile, there was great consternation down at the Plaza, when it was known that Mariana was missing. The terrified and conscience-stricken Lola refused to return to her mistress. An officer took the boy and the sad tidings to the home. Through the night and through the following days, search was made all over the city, while the mother lay in swoons and critical illness. But no little girl was found.

As soon as able to arise from her bed, she crawled to an inner chamber, where, prostrate before the shrine and painted image of the Virgin, she moaned:

"Oh, Holy Mother of God, Holy Virgin, bring to me my child!"

The boy, Frederico, who scarce had left his mother's side these days of grief, stood listening, and looking with those big, questioning eyes. The mother continued her pleading, the boy still watching, while the candles burned on and the image still looked down upon them.

"Mamacita," whispered the boy, draw-

ing close to his mother. "Look, she heeds not! Thou hast told me of God who made us all. Isn't God the greatest? Why dost thou not ask of him?"

"Yes, true, little son," replied the mother, arousing herself. "Yet thou mayest not speak thus lightly of our holy blessed Virgin."

But continued supplications to the Holy Virgin brought no little girl, no consolation to the mother's breaking heart. In despair she sought her priest at the confessional.

"Oh, Father," she cried, "is it because of sin of mine that I am thus punished? Tell me, I beseech thee, what of penance I may do, or of offering I may bring that I may find my daughter!"

The priest looked a moment upon the broken woman. He saw his opportunity but he answered guardedly:

"No, daughter, thou hast committed no sin. This is not a punishment. It is indeed a strange dispensation, but methinks it is yet to be for good; for thine own sanctification and to be for the greater glory of our own blessed Virgin and Mother. Shall I make intercession to her for thee? Surely thou dost know her power, for 'many things are asked of God

and are not granted; they are asked from Mary and are obtained. And how is this? It is because God has thus decreed to honor his Mother.' (Glories of Mary, p. 113.)

"'Why! Mary was made mediatrix even of our salvation. It is true, that in dying Jesus wished to be alone; but when God saw the great desire of Mary to devote herself also to the salvation of men, he ordained that by the sacrifice and offering of the life of this same Jesus, she might co-operate with him in the work of our salvation, and thus become the Mother of our souls.' (Glories of Mary, p. 43.)

"'All who are saved are saved only by means of this divine Mother' (p. 8). 'God has placed the whole price of redemption in the hands of Mary, that she may dispense it at will' (p. 85). 'Our salvation is in the hands of Mary. He who is protected by Mary will be saved; he who is not will be lost' (p. 144). 'At the command of Mary, all obey, even God' (p. 155).

"Then, daughter, if her power is thus equal with God's in the soul's salvation, she has power to bring again to thee thy lost. Shall I invoke her aid?"

"Oh, yes, do, Father!"

"But thou dost know that before anything can be done, money will be necessary?"

Dona Alicia raised her head. For the first time the words of her priest grated harshly on her ears. "Money, money! Why was it always money! For pity, for love of her and her child ought he to be willing to aid, and not for money! He was cruel!"

Her heart smote her for this thought of her priest, and she replied:

"Yes, Father, how much will be required?"

"Well," replied the man slowly, "a great many masses will be required, for our earnestness will be tested; six hundred dollars—say, five hundred, for thou hast ever been a faithful daughter of the Church!"

Dona Alicia did not reply. "My husband, what will he think and say?" flashed through her mind. The only thorn in the happy married life of Dona Alicia and Don Fernando Peralta had been her priest.

"Thou art allowing another man, thy priest, to come in between us! He it is, and not thy husband, who holds the secrets of thy heart. Many a home has thus been broken. Many lives have thus been

separated. Thou dost know this, Alicia, yet I love and trust thee, my wife. Nor is this all; they have taken from me, too, my money on false pretenses. I begrudge it not when deserved, but when they deceive to get it from me, I will refuse."

Thus had often said her husband to her, and it was such words as these that rushed to her memory as she stood, silent, before her priest.

"Is it not worth the cost, my daughter?" said the man, noticing her hesitancy.

"Yes—oh, yes—but my husband!" she faltered.

"Need thy husband know? Is not the money thine as well as his?"

The woman recoiled as from a blow. Looking into her eyes, the priest knew he had blundered.

Ere he could reply, she arose. "I will tell my husband. He will send to you the money."

CHAPTER III.

THE RANSOM.

Mariana clung to her new found protector. They were continually watched, not allowed out of sight; yet they often had frequent opportunities for conversation, spending hours together sitting under the trees near to the hut.

Aurelio told her his story. His lovely hacienda home was only ten leagues from the city where Mariana lived. Indeed, he remembered that the supplies from the hacienda were bought at the big store of Peralta, Mariana's father. Aurelio was an only child, accustomed to the plain and to long rides on his pony, accompanying the peons or alone. On such occasion, he was pursued and seized by a couple of men and carried to this place. From occasional words which he had overheard he had concluded that he was being held for a ransom. This he supposed was Mariana's situation also, and he comforted her by assurance of their return in time.

"Can we not run away some dark night, Aurelio, and find my home?" asked the child.

"No, no! It is far,—leagues and leagues. Thou couldst not walk so far, and they would soon find us again. If we try to run away, they may hurt us, for I have tried it many a time. But if we keep quiet, we will all the sooner be sent home. They are waiting for money."

"Oh, my papa is rich, he will send them money. Shall I tell them?"

"No, we must keep quiet and wait."

One morning Aurelio led her to a distant rock where they often sat together. "Something is going to happen!" he said, speaking hurriedly. "I have heard some words, I am to be sent home!"

"And I, too?" interrupted the excited child.

"Be very quiet!" continued Aurelio. "No, queridita, I fear it is only I, but I promise this,—I will go at once and tell your papa where you are." Mariana was crying and laughing.

"Come here," said the boy, and stooping, he drew from under the rock a little packet. Unwrapping the rags, he disclosed a dainty, slender golden chain with a little hanging cross.

"Oh, it is just like the one they took from me," said the girl, breathing hard.

"Yes, my mother gave it to me, she said, because she had no girl. I was to wear it

to remind me to pray morning and evening to our blessed Virgin Mary. When they took from me my clothes, as they did thine, I snatched this from my neck and put it in my mouth. Then when they did not see, I slipped it into my shoe, till I could hide it out of doors. I will give it to thee to keep till I see thee again. But I must hide it again, and do not take it from this place till thou art going, for they will see it and take it from thee."

"Oh, I am so glad. It is so pretty! But I wish I had something to give to thee!"

"I have already something of thine!" laughed the boy, pulling from under his torn little shirt a shining black curl. "I found this where they had thrown thine hair, thy beautiful curls, and I will keep it to make me think of thee. And I will look for thy papa, and soon thou, too, wilt be home again!"

"Oh, quickly, so quickly!" cried little Mariana.

"They are calling us now," added the boy, stooping to hide the packet, and to pick up a handful of pebbles as an excuse.

There was no further opportunity for words. The boy was told to put on quickly his own clothes, which had been hidden from him. He saw two men on horses. He

was told to climb behind one of the men. Mariana shuddered, for she saw again the fellow with shifting eyes and the scar across his forehead. But she had learned to make no outbreaks. Only an interchange of looks was there between the children—one of loving farewell, the other of mute, longing appeal.

The boy saw they were approaching the city, Mariana's city.

"I will cry out in the streets! I will shout and tell them where she is, that they may go at once and get her!" said the boy to himself.

Just outside the wall they halted, by the shrine of the Virgin, where travelers were wont to stop and pray for safe journey. One of the men, reaching under the hollow pedestal, drew something forth. His eyes gleamed.

"Well for thee, boy, that this is here!" he exclaimed to Aurelio. "Now run to the inn of San Andres and find those who will be awaiting thee."

Then looking again with gloating eye over the money, he exclaimed, "And large share of this is mine! I will get it!"

Reaching the inn, Aurelio saw his father standing. Rushing into his arms, he cried:

"Oh, here I am, but Mariana is still there! Tell her father to go now—now—to

get her—back there in the canyon; she is—back in the hills!"

Then followed an hour of excitement, friends gathering about the boy, others in search of Peralta, Mariana's father, who was to have an armed force and go to the rescue of his little girl.

But none had taken special note of one who stood by in the crowd, with apparent indifference, his hat pulled low over an ugly line across his temple, and who, disappearing, secured a fresh horse and fled with rapid pace across the plain, up into the canyon.

Events had been moving rapidly the last few days. As soon as Aurelio's mother knew that her son was released, upon the deposit of money under the shrine, she, too, formed her plan. She had not succumbed, as had Mariana's mother, and now, as resolute as ever, she declared her intention to take her son, at once, with her by train down to the seaport, from thence by steamer down the coast, by caravan across the country to Guadalajara and to Mexico City, where lived her brother. Nothing but death, she declared, could prevent her departure from the scene of her anguish. Her husband could dispose of the property and follow.

They were to go at once. "But not till

I see my dear little Mariana," cried the boy. "I promised her, and I want to see her again!"

But the Senor Peralta agreed to write as soon as his daughter could be recovered.

That afternoon, as the vessel bearing Aurelio and his mother was steaming out of the gulf, and as Senor Peralta, with his armed force, was nearing the mouth of the canyon, a little group was winding its way around the foot hills beyond; a lean, old horse, with a woman seated thereon, holding in front of her a little girl, while a man and a hungry-looking yellow dog walked by their side.

CHAPTER IV.

A DESERTED CITY.

Several years had passed. A terrible scourge was sweeping the west coast of Mexico; "Fiebre Amarillo" men called it (Yellow Fever). Sanitary restrictions were feeble, and the pestilence spread like fire across a dry plain. Many had fled at once, by the one railroad, across to Arizona. But when the trains were cut off, the masses, now thoroughly alarmed, sought escape to the mountains, to the haciendas, anywhere, burying their money and valuables till they might return.

Among these latter were the Senor Peralta, his wife and little Frederico. Her strange indifference to the danger had prevented their earlier escape, and this delay had proved fatal to the kind Senor Peralta.

"Take my boy and his mother at once, Juan," he had said to his faithful servant. "Hire a carriage, and take them across the country, up over our northern line, where they may take the train to the City of Mexico. Thou wilt not lack for

means. Lift up the bricks under my bed, and there thou wilt find the money and the jewels which thou mayst sell. Hasten, my good Juan!"

Only a few hours of intense suffering and the good Don Fernando was borne away to be laid in the hastily prepared burying place, where lay, side by side, the rich and poor alike.

Juan would not leave his master till he was tenderly placed away. And when he returned to search for the buried treasures, he found the bricks upturned, but nothing there.

He did not know that one standing without, listening under the window, had heard; one with narrow, glittering eyes and a dark mark across his forehead. And he had laughed aloud when he held in his hand gold and pearls, rare pearls, white, green and black, which the divers had drawn from the deep Gulf waters.

"Ah, now," he had exclaimed, "now I am rich! No longer need they call me 'Devil's errand boy,' nor anybody's errand boy! My own master now I am, for rich I am! I, too, may leave this city, and live and travel and be a gentleman!"

Little did it matter that Juan had found no gold, for his well loved mistress had succumbed, and she, too, was carried



away. But by strangers, for Juan himself was prostrated. Recovering after a few days, he found little Frederico crouching by his side, they two the only occupants of the once beautiful home of Peralta.

After a few months the pestilence had spent itself, and the people began to return. But a strange city it looked, and men wept as they looked into empty houses and streets full of rubbish which had been thrown away in hasty flight.

But the deserted houses began again to be opened. Into the churches gathered again the people, masses to be purchased and said for the many dear departed, confessions to be made and penance to be worked out. The Church took possession of homes where there were none to protect. The house of Peralta was one. It was renovated and refitted for a boys' school, to be in charge of a new priest, "Father Lorenzo," just from the City of Mexico. Juan was to continue his ministrations and Frederico was to become a member of the boys' school. His voice, now recognized as a talent, placed him at lead in the boys' choir in the big cathedral.

"La voz de un Angel" (The voice of an Angel) men called it, for it was a wonderful voice, and they gathered into the

cathedral to hear it. Soft and sweet, yet clear, though far away, it sounded, as if an echo from heaven above. Then bursting forth, the music filled all space, till listeners, for delight, could no longer keep their seats, and, looking up to see the singer, they saw only a lad, with thin, small face, but whose big, dark eyes looked far away.

CHAPTER V.

A VERY STRANGE THING.

But a very strange thing had happened. Dona Alicia had been removed by strangers' hands, who laid her upon the ground among the dead, and quickly made their own escape. Later on came others more merciful, who were preparing to lay her away, when they saw signs of life.

"Por Dios! Que es este? (What is this?) She still lives. A woman of high rank, too! Is there no one who will have pity?" and they lifted her to the nearest dwelling.

"We know not who this may be, but will ye have mercy and care for her, that she may yet return to those who mourn her?"

And live she did, but it was weeks before she cared to ask where she was, or to ask aught about her friends or family. Then she was told that the family of Fernando Peralta was no more, either dead they were, or had left the city, her benefactors knew not which. Her home, too, they told her, had become the new academy for boys.

The jewels found about her person re-

paid these Good Samaritans and also paid her passage, by stage, to the Hacienda Roja, where merciful strangers had consented to her stay for a while, which continued, for the inmates of the hacienda soon learned to love the gentle, beautiful woman, whose face was young, but whose hair was white. No one knew other name than Dona Alicia. But the children loved to gather about and listen to her stories of a far-away country—beautiful Spain, she called it—where ladies wore rich silks and jewels every day, and walked on soft carpets; where knights in velvet garments, and with white plumes in their hats, walked beside them or kneeled at their feet; where the houses were great towered castles, and the cups from which they drank were made of gold and silver. Sometimes she told them of two beautiful children, a boy and a girl, whose mother loved them tenderly, but she never spoke their names. She never laughed, but her smile was so gentle that even the fretful baby, whom no one else could quiet, loved to lie in her arms and look up into her face. Beautiful embroideries, too, she stitched, which they took into the city to sell in payment for their kindness.

"Why do you never go with us into the city?" inquired the children. "It is love-

ly there! The cathedral is so big and grand! The padres and the bishop so elegant in their fine garments, the boys in the choir sing so beautifully, and—oh, there is one among them who sings—oh, so heavenly is his voice, that his name is 'Voice of an Angel.' Will you not go with us, Dona Alicia?"

"Some time, children, I will. Not this time," was ever the reply.

But upon each return from the city she watched to see if there might be a letter, for she had written her brother in Mexico, making inquiries.

But no letter ever came.

CHAPTER VI.

"THE HERETICS" AND FATHER LORENZO.

Several years had passed. The city was fast growing into new life. The trains from the North were bringing many foreigners who were learning that, in Western Mexico, lay great wealth, gold and silver and copper buried under the high mountains.

Among these came two—a man and his wife—who seemed in no great haste. They were in no quest of gold or silver. They rented a house, and soon those passing along the street saw behind the barred windows a display of books, large and small, but mostly Bibles. Those who chose to enter took away with them leaflets and papers.

Then it began to be told about that these newcomers were "heretics," a dangerous, godless people. The books they had sold and given away were very harmful; the Bibles, indeed, were not genuine, for they were "heretic Bibles." As far as possible, those who had bought were ordered to bring them to the Cura, and they were burned in front of the cathedral as a

warning. From the pulpit, excommunications were threatened to such as should have dealing with these heretics, said excommunications meaning the everlasting loss of souls. Along the street walls were posters which read:

"Beware of the heretics! They are devils! Excommunication from the most Holy Church to any who shall buy or sell to them, talk or listen to them, or upon whom their shadow even shall fall!"

But the heretic still walked the streets. His was a kindly face, men said, and when he smiled, they said, "Surely no devil can smile like that!"

And though there were many who shunned him, there were others, who, standing in their shop doors, would say, with a sly wink, as he passed:

"Come in here, Senor Heretic, buy of me. The Holy Church will not think my poor soul worth the cutting off!"

Gradually, people, losing fear, would gather into the front room or listen outside the window while the heretic told his story. The story of Him whose sacrifice upon the cross was so complete that there was no longer need for intercession of virgin, priest or saint.

Meanwhile, the boys' school, under the direction of the new Father Lorenzo, was

growing. His pupils all loved him, for there was something about the quiet man which drew them. He seemed to have passed through some sorrow which made him sympathetic. Frederico, the lonely boy, was especially drawn toward him. Father Lorenzo, in turn, took the boy into his heart. So often were they seen together that they became known as uncle and nephew. The boy loved nothing better than to sit by his side and listen to stories of the great City of Mexico, where his life had been spent.

"A strong, wild people had lived there once," he told the boy. "Then had come men from Spain, in the name of the holy Catholic faith, and had conquered these bloody people, and had given to them, instead of their idols, beautiful painted pictures and images to worship."

But when the old priest told of the cruelties by which the Spaniard drew from the Indians their jewels and their gold, his voice trembled and his dark eyes burned darker.

"Tell me again of the Indian who fought that his people might live," said the boy.

Then springing to his feet and walking the room, the old man would tell again of Juarez, the fearless Indian, who for fourteen years braved all dangers, though

hunted like a wild thing, meeting the enemy again and again, and conquering at last, that his people might think and worship as they pleased. He it was to whom Victor Hugo wrote, "America has two heroes, Lincoln, by whom slavery has died; Thee, by whom liberty has lived."

"My boy," said the old man, still walking the floor and closing his lips in that way Frederico had noticed of late, "my boy, those were dark days for Mexico. For three hundred years had she been under a power (I will not say more of that power) which kept her as a slave, till one man—one man—rose and said, 'My people shall think and worship as they please.' But there were others then who thought and fought with him. There be others now who would dare the same, for even now there be those who may not think and worship as they please."

The boy wondered, though little he understood. He did not know that in the veins of Father Lorenzo ran the same blood of the Indian Juarez and the same deep love for liberty in all. Nor did he know that, in the City of Mexico, strange things had been said of him. That he had dared to do his own thinking and his own teaching, which the Church called "insubordination." For this he had been sent

to the new field, in hope that new surroundings and new duties would bring him to himself again, for he was too valuable a scholar and a worker to lose.

But strange things were whispered about him, even now. When the poor came to him for baptism or for marriage, his fees were very low. Fellow priests scoffed him and called him "a fool," "not knowing his own chances."

"They pay me what they are able! I wish no more. Most of our poor live without a marriage rite because they are not able to pay what our Church requires of them. Shall we, their priests, help them on in their unholy living?"

It was also said that he had once told a penitent, "I can not forgive thy sin! Take it to God!"

"Why, man," exclaimed the angry bishop, when calling him to account, "what dost thou mean by thus belittling the power of the priesthood?"

"I hear, too," said the bishop, "that thou dost allow some of the students free access to the Holy Scriptures. Have more of a care! Only with explanations of the priest is the Bible to be read by the laity!"

No one knew that in Father Lorenzo's chest was a heretic Bible, a gift from a boyhood friend in Mexico City, and that

friend a heretic. Nor did any one know how often, alone in his room, the little book was taken out and read. Father Lorenzo was learning the *truth* about his Church—about himself and his duty.

CHAPTER VII.

"THOU HAST NOT DENIED MY NAME."

One night there was a tap at the heretic's study door, which opened into the street. He was surprised, at the instant, as he saw, standing before him, the smooth-shaven face and the man gowned as a priest. By his side stood a lad. The heretic recognized the boy singer and Father Lorenzo, for they had exchanged salutations upon the street.

"You are surprised to see me!" said the priest.

"You are none the less welcome!" was the reply.

"Let me state my errand at once," said the priest accepting the proffered chair. "For a long time I have felt that I am living a false life. I have been posing as one who is able to forgive sin, when in reality I know none but God is able to forgive sin, and none more needy of forgiveness than I myself. My boy and I, for he knows somewhat of my trouble, have come to you for instruction."

"Thank God, my brother!" exclaimed the heretic, grasping by the hand, his visitor.

"We are all sinners, and in need of Divine forgiveness!"

Long time and earnestly talked the two together, the boy listening the while.

Then they kneeled together. His duty they knew, but they prayed for strength to do that duty. When they arose from their knees, a new light shone upon each face.

"Your life will now be in danger!" said the Protestant.

"I know, but death even is preferable to the misery through which I have been passing these last few weeks. Yet I would live to make amends and to warn others!"

"Come to us if there is danger!"

"I will," said Father Lorenzo, gratefully, "But in any case I beg of you, take charge of my boy. I love him, and do not wish him to lead such a life as mine. I will come again and tell you my plans."

But little knew Father Lorenzo that other plans had been laid for him. That visit to the heretic's had not been unnoticed.

Upon entering his own doorway, he was met by the bishop. Father Lorenzo saw, at a glance, the conflict before him. For a moment he felt weak, but a cry from his heart to God brought calm and courage.

"Let our interview be in private, in thine own room!" sternly said the bishop.

"Where hast thou spent this evening?"
"In the house of the Protestant minister."

"And what didst thou there?"

"Reverend Father and Bishop," replied the priest, "long time I have known that my life was a mockery. Yet I knew not how to leave, and I feared to tell thee. I know now my duty. I go now from this place and henceforth avow myself a Protestant, an heretic, if thou pleaseth."

The bishop's face showed surprise and anger.

"It seems thy plans are well laid! But thou dost forget my permission. Without it thou canst not leave!"

Then stepping to the door, he opened it and called to him two men who waited.

"Here, take this man in charge and conduct him to my residence!"

"Do not touch me!" said Father Lorenzo in a quiet tone. "I am not a criminal. I go alone as a man. I am ready," he added, turning toward the bishop.

But at that instant in rushed the lad Frederico. Clinging to the priest he cried:

"Oh, what is it? where art thou to go?"

"Remove this boy! He is to remain here!" spoke the bishop sharply.

But before the lad was taken away Father Lorenzo whispered in his ear, "Tell

Juan, and flee thou to the house of the heretics, and stay there!"

The streets were dimly lighted, and several times came to him the thought to attempt his escape. But he had given his word and scorned to break it. He was locked into a small back room in the bishop's residence. Fr derico had sought the faithful Juan.

"Yes, go at once to the house of the Protestante. Stay there till I go for thee. I will keep near to our padre, and if thou dost hear strange things of me, do not believe them. I will save him if I can!"

The heretic was closing for the night, when he heard a timid knock, and there stood the lad, weeping out his sad story.

"Stay within this house," said the good man. "Do not go upon the streets. I will do all I can to save our dear Father Lorenzo."

"Why, here is Juan, servant of Father Lorenzo! What seekest thou? News of thy heretic master?" called one, as early the next morning Juan stepped into the court of the bishop's residence.

"Is it true that my old master has turned heretic?" said Juan in bantering tone. "I scarce believe it. "Yet if it is, he will here find just reward for such an act!"

"What meanest thou, Juan?"

"I mean this: it is a shame to be counted a heretic, but for a priest—a priest like Father Lorenzo—to turn heretic, shame is no word. It is a disgrace to our Holy Church, and the traitor, be it Father Lorenzo even, must suffer just consequences!"

"Why, listen. I thought thou wast given over soul and body to the service of thy master? What sort of talk is this?" All day Juan stayed about the place, and as they told him of Father Lorenzo's repeated refusals to recant, he shook his head, saying:

"The traitor; let him suffer!"

All day, too, Father Lorenzo, locked in that little back room, had tasted no food; but upon his knees his soul had feasted upon the heavenly manna, and though several opportunities had been given to renounce his false belief, he refused.

That night the door again opened. The bishop, with two padres, stood before him.

"This is thy last chance to repent and forsake this foolish course."

"I have nothing to repent, save my sins. They are already forgiven," was the quiet reply.

"Why waste further words with this stubborn heretic?" angrily exclaimed the bishop to his companions. "Let us test him in the room below."

Silently they passed on down the back corridor, lighted only by one dim hanging lamp. There was no escaping now. Father Lorenzo knew whither he was being led, for he had heard of the underground dungeon from whence none had ever returned. Yet he felt no fear. One instant he started, for he thought, as a figure stepped out from a shadow down in the corridor that it was his Juan. But the figure drew into the shadow again.

Through a narrow iron door they passed, down a dark stone stairway, and stood a moment upon the ground floor to accustom themselves to the still dimmer light. Two men were there in working garments. As in a dream, the old priest Lorenzo saw the gleam of metal, and heard the clang of irons. The voices of the men sounded strangely distant, as they approached, tore from him his outer garments, threw him to the ground and cut him with their irons. He felt them crunch and tighten about him, and heard the orders given in quick, short words, by "holy priest of God," to agonize, to torture a fellow being, because he dared believe what the Holy Church of God called "heresy." No cry he made; only low moans escaped those thin, white lips which refused to deny their Maker.

Oh, Church of Rome! Holy Church of Rome! Thou whited sepulchre! Thy walls are spattered and stained with the blood of many martyrs! Thou who liftest thy head so proud and high, and sayest "there is no salvation outside my walls," how will be thine own salvation? And what wilt thou say for thyself in that last great day, that day of justice, when the great God of the Ages shall call thee to account? What wilt thou say for thyself?

(Not fewer than seventy Protestant Mexicans have been put to death in that country by the Church of Rome.)

Through the long, dark night and at early morn, there lay upon the cold ground floor a body, torn and mangled, but its heart still beating acknowledgment of its Maker, God; its soul still seeing its Savior, Jesus Christ.

Serenely walked the bishop of that most holy Church up and down his corridor, saluting and talking jovially with one and another.

"Yes, it was true," he said; "the reports were true. The devil had carried off Father Lorenzo that night, soul and body, and such would be like fate to any others who might turn heretic. The noise as of a scuffle in that room had been heard by several, and others had heard the rustling

and flapping of great wings as they passed through the barred window and flew off in the darkness. The room, when entered, was found empty. So, of course, it was true. A terrible warning thus to all!"

At first light of day a servant had been dispatched, in secret, to the room below, to report to the bishop. The messenger objected not to one who suddenly joined him in the dark corridor and walked along by his side. Without a word the two descended and leaned over the prostrate form.

"He still lives," said the servant.

"Leave me here," said the other. "Tell no word on me. It will be to thy advantage."

With an indifferent shrug the man moved on, ascended the stairway and locked the door behind him.

Then kneeled Juan, and tenderly raised the martyr's head within his arms.

"My master, my master! what have they done to thee?" he cried. Warm tears fell upon the upturned face. The white lips moved and whispered, "Juan, Juan, eres tu?" (Is it thou?)

After some hours the same servant returned.

"Bring me water—quick—oil and wine. Let no one come here for a day of two;

tell them anything, till he may recover and I may take him hence!"

"Take him hence? No one ever leaves this place! Seest there those graves? There is room for more, two more at least."

"Nevertheless, do as I tell thee!"

The servant returned with what had been asked, and handed to Juan a couple of small loaves, or rolls, of bread.

No air or light entered from without. The light from the small hanging lamp went out, but in the darkness Juan kneeled, gently rubbing oils on the wounds, touching the fevered lips with water and wine. It might have been hours, it might have been days, Juan knew not; but he still kneeled, himself faint from the foul air, whispering words of love and cheer to his dear master.

"Orad, Juan, a Dios" (Pray, Juan, to God), were the whispered words ever and anon.

It was the warm season of the year. During the hot noon hours, men and women left their work. But as evening drew on, doors and windows were opened to the cooler air, and people sat in doorways, corridors or even along the sidewalks chatting or seeking some cooler spot.

Suddenly a low distant rumble was

heard, then a trembling, a shaking—a great and terrible shaking—for the Maker of this earth had reached out and touched it, and it trembled and shook, walls crumbled, roofs fell and men and women staggered about screaming, “Tremblor, tremblor!” For more helpless than the weakest insect is man when God does shake his resting place.

The rear walls of the bishop's residence had fallen in; a long seam extending down into the dungeon walls. Air and light rushed in. Juan sprang to his feet, realizing what had happened, and with an instinct and strength born for the occasion, rushed to the gap, tearing away the loosened ground till he could look into the street above him. He called to a couple of men, who, from without, while he within, widened the gap, till lowering themselves, the three lifted the mangled form, covering it with a “serape” (native blanket which the men often carry about their persons), and bore it through the excited crowd to the nearest home of a friend.

The heretic missionary was summoned. Loving friends ministered most tenderly until the true, loyal soul went to meet the Master whom he would not deny.

Then the heretic missionary, in lawful indignation, spread the story, the cruel

story, all about, though the press refused him room, for they feared to print aught against their priests.

The eyes of many were opened for the first time to the cruelty and deceptions of the "Holy Church of Rome."

Some said the earthquake was God's visitation in anger for the cruel deed. Others said the earthquake was a blow against the heretics, though it was well known that the heretics' premises had not been damaged.

The lad Frederico clung more closely than ever to his new-found protectors. They, realizing his danger, kept him closely sheltered. He did not go upon the street. His grief found vent through his music.

By the hours sat the boy at the organ, his fingers drawing sweet melody from the keys, and his voice, wonderfully tender and pathetic now, floated out through the windows, till passersby stopped to listen and to say:

"Strange things are happening in our city! A priest is murdered because he turns heretic, and now here is that 'voice of an angel' singing heretic songs. What are we coming to, Jesus Maria?"

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO MOTHERS.

One day there came a visitor to the Protestant's house, a woman whose hair was white and whose face, though young and beautiful, was strangely sad.

"Is this where the heretic lives?" she inquired. "Some months ago he left at our hacienda some papers and this 'New Testament,' he called it. I have been reading them, till they have brought comfort to my sad heart. But I would know more. I would talk with the heretic!"

And as they talked together, the songs and wonderful voice of the lad at the organ floated into the room. The woman ceased her talking, hearing only the singing. A strange look had come over her face.

"We will go into that room and listen," said the missionary, stepping to open the door. But the woman was there before him. She opened the door herself, stood a moment looking, listening.

Frederico turned his face. With a scream she fell toward him, crying, "My boy! oh, my boy!"

Far into the night they talked, listening and telling each to the other of the strange things that had befallen.

"Let us kneel together and thank God above for his love and kindness toward us," said the heretic. "And now," he added, turning toward the happy Dona Alicia, "stay with us for a few days, and then let me accompany you both to El Paso, where, for a few years, you both may live; your son to escape danger here, and fit himself for a life of usefulness, and you to make for him a home.

The heretic missionary made frequent trips to the mining villages, driving in his little cart alone, over the rough mountain roads. Holding services in these places and leaving tracts and Bibles, his journeyings, though gladly done, were wearisome. At such home returnings, nothing rested the tired man better than to take into his arms his own little laughing baby girl. First a merry tussle, soft little baby hands tugging with might and main at papa's hair, laughing and calling the while; then a velvety cheek against his own, two little arms creeping about his neck; then a little stillness, for baby is tired, and soon a little head is resting upon his breast. The big, brown head above begins to droop, and papa's cheek is resting now against the

little head, breathing in the fragrance of the silky hair. The two fluttering little fists are quiet now, held tight in one warm grasp; and mother, coming in just then, finds them both asleep, the father and his baby girl together.

But there came a day when there stood in the middle of the room a little white coffin, and in that coffin lay his baby girl, white and still as the pure white blossoms covering the little casket.

The mother kneeled, crushed with a new great grief.

"Why, oh Shepherd above, didst thou give this wee, white lamb, if only to take her from us again? Only one we had. There are other folds where thou mightest have taken, and they would not have been missed. There are other wee lambs who have no homes, who are cold and hungry; why didst thou not send and gather there? Why, oh why, didst thou take from us our only one, and she so safe and warm and well protected?"

Then in the soul was whispered:

"Daughter, be quiet! 'Why?' Thou wilt know—not now—only wait! Thy babe so safely sheltered in her heavenly fold, thou wouldst not call back again to pain and sin. And where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also!"

But when they came to lay the little one away for her long rest, then mother grief broke out afresh.

"My baby, to be left alone—alone, and she so little—in the cold, dark ground! Oh! she will waken and cry, because she is alone and cold! Cruel are ye to take her from me and cruel is God!"

Again, in her soul, was whispered:

"Be quiet. If thou canst trust with me that little spirit, canst thou not trust with me its mortal frame? I gave them both and take and keep them both!"

"Oh, father," sobbed the mother, "I know I am to have my babe again; but tell me, will she be my baby still, or will she be so grown and changed I will not know my own!"

"Daughter, he who is able to keep for thee thy little one is able so to present her to thee again that thou will be fully satisfied. Trust! Cease thy mourning! Thine is not the only grief on earth. Arise, and carry comfort to other sorrowing mothers; for, until now, thou hast not known to comfort others."

CHAPTER IX.

MARIANA.

The little group that was winding around the foothills at the same time that Aurelio and his mother were steaming out of the bay and into the Gulf of California, was now approaching a mountain mining camp.

"Alight here and await my return," said the man.

The pony began to graze, the hungry dog threw himself in weakness upon the ground, while the woman quieted the girl with promising that to-morrow they were surely going to the city. In about half an hour the man returned, saying that the rescue party was scattered all over that region.

"I await thee here while thou takest the child up toward the nearest house. Leave her there. Thou and I must escape!"

Just as Mariana was left alone in the pathway leading to the house, the door opened and a woman came out. Instinc-

tively the girl ran up toward her, and seeing that the face was kind, burst out:

"Oh, take me to my mother; my father will pay thee—he is rich—oh, take me, for they stole me!"

"Why, what is this?" said the woman kindly. "This must be the little daughter of Peralta. Searches were made here this very day! But, Virgin Santísima—those eyes—just like my Rosaria's, now in her grave these six months! But thy hair; what have they done to thee?"

"They cut it off—my mamma; oh, my mamma—take me to her!"

"Yes, querida, but come in first," and taking the little frightened, sobbing child kindly by the hand, she led her within; and two hours later, washed, fed and clad in Rosaria's garments, fast asleep in Dona Refugia's sheltering arms, she looked another girl.

"Just look here!" exclaimed the woman to her husband, entering the door. "Just come and look at this child! The very image of our Rosaria, she is. Poor little thing! She is the stolen child of Peralta. We must return her to anxious parents, but I would love to keep her, for she could be to me in Rosaria's place!" And, wiping off a falling tear, she drew the sleeping child close to her.

"She is, in truth, very like our Rosaria," replied her husband; "but I have come with a message for thee. Pedro has come from the ranch with news of thy father's death. Thy mother is alone and sick, and summons thee. We must go by morn tomorrow, if possible."

Dona Refugia's sorrow because of her father's death made her even more tender toward the child. "What shall we do with her?" asked the woman of her husband. "Shall we leave her here till word may be carried to her parents, or shall we take her with us, and find a way ourselves to send her home? What wilt thou, little one; wilt thou stay with us till we may take thee to thy mother?"

Mariana gladly preferred to stay by her new-found protector.

"See that word is sent to Don Peralta about his child," she said to several neighbors who had come next morning to bid farewell. "Tell him to send to 'El Rancho del Agua Fresca' for his daughter."

But there were no telephones or telegraphs in that mining camp—only a weekly stage, and somehow no message was sent to Don Fernando Peralta.

Dona Refugia's stay at 'El Rancho del Agua Fresca' was prolonged. Her mother's death and the passing into her hands of

the ranch property made it their future home. And the weeks and the months went by, but no father came for his little girl. Some time they would carry little Mariana themselves, but it would be a trip, by horse, of several days, and the journey was postponed from time to time.

Then came the news of the terrible scourge, the "yellow fever," and among those who had died was the family of Senor Peralta. Dona Refugia was, secretly, not much grieved over the news, for now she could give to Mariana her own name. The grief of children can not always stay; and, though Mariana wept, she in time forgot and grew happy and contented with her foster parents. But she loved to tell about her beautiful "first mamma"; her little brother who could sing like a bird, and about Aurelio, so strong and tall and straight, who had protected her, and who had given to her the delicate chain she wore about her neck. She had found the moment to snatch it from under the rock before she was taken away, and never since that day would she allow it to leave her.

"Aurelio gave it to me. He told me to keep it till he could come for it. I will keep it till he comes, for some day I shall see him again. My Aurelio, so brave and

kind! I love him; he was my big brother!"

Mariana Gavina (for this was her name now) grew fast in her out-of-door life, her head covered again with glossy ringlets, and she was happy. There were children belonging to the peons of the ranch, with whom she played. There was no school, but Dona Refugia herself continued her lessons in reading and writing, which had been begun before she was stolen from her parents. Of one little baby in particular was Mariana very fond, and nothing pleased her better than to care for her while the mother was at her work.

But one day baby was very ill. "She will die!" cried the agonized mother, "but she has never been baptized, so will be lost! What shall I do? There is no padre here to baptize my babe!"

"Bring the child to me," said Dona Refugia. "I can baptize it. It will be just as valid, if the right words are said, and said in the right order."

So the babe and water were brought. Dona Refugia made the sign of the cross on the forehead of the little one, repeated the formula, and the child was baptized, and lived, for from that moment she grew better, all said.

CHAPTER X.

THE BISHOP AND HIS POWER.

The Reverend Bishop Rico was expected at the ranch on his occasional tour among the country folk. Mariana, now twelve years old, was to receive, with several other children, the rite of confirmation. White dresses had been made whose beautiful trimmings of hand embroideries and drawn work had occupied many months. The materials, the white ribbons and the veils which the girls were to wear, were brought from the nearest town. The great and long-looked-for day at last arrived. A forerunner, on horse, brought the tidings of the near approach of the bishop. The residents of the ranch gathered, while half a dozen of the young men ran on to meet the coach, and removing the horses, they themselves drew the great man in his carriage into the yard, all the people falling on their knees.

Mariana was awed, as she saw the "holy man" step down upon the robes cast before his feet. His velvet gown and mitre

were stiff with gold embroideries and sparkling with precious stones. He graciously extended his finger tips for each to kiss, after which they arose and followed into Dona Refugia's private room, which had been fitted up with altar, images and appropriate belongings. The (custodia) box, in which is carried the host, was also richly decorated with gold and silver and jewels, and was carefully borne by an attendant.

At one side of the room kneeled those who were to be confirmed, for they must first make free and full confession to the bishop of their sins. Mariana, in her fright, could remember but few misdeeds. The man, by way of reminders, questioned her as to probable faults in deed, word or thought, to all of which she stammered replies.

As they kneeled again before the altar, and in front of the bishop, he extended first his hands above them, then made upon their foreheads the sign of the cross with the chrism (the most holy of the three sacred oils which are blessed by the bishop every Maundy Thursday), and solemnly pronounced the words:

"I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of sal-

vation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit!"

Then he gave a slight blow upon the cheek of each, to remind them that they must expect to meet hardships.

After a rest, and the dinner which had been prepared for him, Bishop Rico had other duties demanding his attention.

One of the peons had lately been buried, and his wife was in great distress lest his soul was still in purgatory. He had worn the scapular all his life. The scapular is a bit of cloth, stamped with the Virgin's image, and is worn upon the breast under the garments. To those who wear these all their lives the Holy Mother has promised to "come down to purgatory the Saturday after their death, and lift them to the mountains of Glory." He had also left money to pay for masses for his soul, but the distressed widow feared that it had not been enough.

"Let the woman be brought!" said the Reverend Bishop Rico, after listening to a statement of the case. Leading by the hand her little boy, she kneeled before him.

"Hast thou wherewith to pay for the masses for the soul of thy husband?" asked the man.

"Yes, Reverend Father Obispo. Antonio, my husband, left two dollars with me, all he had—for we are poor, Senor!"

"Well," replied the man, "this is a very low sum. Thou dost know, where there is high money, there is high mass; low money, low mass; no money, no mass."

The woman sighed. The bishop looked indifferently in the other direction.

"Well!" he said, after a pause, "thou hast no money; masses will be impossible without money. But there is yet a way. Thou hast friends. Hast thou some article in thine house that can be raffled among thy friends? This may take the place of money."

The woman thought. She had nothing of value in her house! Yes! there was that table cover which she had been embroidering. She had been working on it for months, and was intending, with the sale of it, to get for herself and children something to wear, for it would be worth ten dollars at least. But she would be glad to forego those garments if thus she might secure the release of her husband's soul in purgatory!

"It is not my concern," said the reverend coldly. "It concerns only thee and the soul of thy husband!"

"Oh, yes, Father! I have something!" exclaimed the widow.

The people gathered. The Reverend Bishop himself conducted the raffle. Each paid for a draw, but it was Diego Martinez who received the table cover for his wife, one hundred and sixty days of indulgence for himself, and release from purgatory the soul of his friend Antonio.

But there was yet a marriage ceremony, confessions to hear, penances to impose, offerings to receive, and the widow's baby to be baptized. But, as she was absolutely penniless now Dona Refugia paid the dollar fee.

The sun was lowering in the west before the bishop and his attendants were able to continue on their journey. They were to be in a neighboring hacienda for a special night function.

"It was not such a bad thing, after all, this side trip, was it, Senor Obispo?" said his attendant in familiar tone, as they rolled along.

"Not so bad!" murmured the bishop, as he laid his hand on the money bag, languidly closed his eyes and leaned against the cushioned back.

CHAPTER XI.

ALTIZO TOWN AND ITS MAYOR.

Several days' journey by horse from El Rancho del Agua Fresca, there stretched a beautiful green valley. Following the clear stream of water, which spread itself in this valley, one had need to make a gradual climb, till the valley narrowed to a canyon, and up against one of its sloping sides stood a town, built tier upon tier. Borings in the mountain side, and miners' huts and paraphernalia, revealed the metals hidden there; while the stream below and fields of maize and sugar cane and melon patches showed industries of other kinds. A thrifty little town this was, the town of Altiza, busy and prosperous its people, and safe to live among. But perhaps, this was mostly due to Don Ramon, the Alcalde, or town mayor.

Nothing of lawlessness would he allow. The quarrelsome kept out of reach of those strong arms, and flinched before the gaze of those piercing black eyes. The insolent were silenced by words that fell like blows. And yet the poor feared not to come to him for justice or for money, while chil-

dren ran across the street to meet the jolly Don Ramon.

The young men respectfully saluted and sought calling acquaintance at his house, because of Constancia, his beautiful seventeen-year-old daughter.

Constancia and her father were all in all to each other; indeed, the girl could scarce recall her mother, or her death. Aunt Eulalia might order his house for him, but Constancia must sit by his side at the table, meet him at the door, and give to him her farewell kiss and blessing.

"Admirers may sit about the sala and look with languishing eyes upon my daughter; I claim none of such mute appeals. But when they speak I too must hear. Their *words* must be for both of us. *Es verad, hijita?*" would say the father, a merry twinkle in those keen eyes.

"But dost thou never expect the girl to find a husband?" would ask Aunt Eulalia.

"Certainly, sister mine! When he comes who is strong enough and brave enough to take and keep her."

So came the wooers, one by one, and went again, wondering, each in turn, what deed of valor he must do to show himself "strong enough and brave enough."

Aunt Eulalia fondly loved her brother

and his lovely Constanca. For this reason she often chided.

"How can't thou, brother, thus endanger the soul of thy daughter? Thou dost not allow her to attend mass, nor go to confession. How can she be saved? Her soul will be forever cast out!"

"My daughter confess to a man—and to a man who, though pretending to live a holy life, in reality lives a life of open shamelessness! I allow no priest to come between me and my daughter, as did priest between her mother and myself. Her confessions shall be made to God and not to man!"

"Ah, now I know thou art an heretic, for thus do they blaspheme our holy priesthood!" said his sister sorrowfully.

"Whether heretic or not, I do not care! This I do know, nothing of priest for my daughter or for me. Our God cares not for vain words counted upon each bead, or whispered into the ears of saint or virgin!"

"La Virgin Santisima forgive thee, if possible! I fear thy soul is already lost!"

The only reply would be a shrug of those broad shoulders, and a merry burst of laughter, always especially irritating to poor Aunt Eulalia.

But the mayor had his enemies, the Cura—Father Jacinto.

"Thou keep order in thy church, and I will keep order in my town!" Don Ramon had dared to say, for the priests in Mexico expect to control in affairs both religious and civil.

The mayor's open defiance had angered the cura. Don Ramon was too strong and too popular a man for the priest to chastise, so he quietly and shrewdly awaited opportunities. Yet he was not blind to the growing popularity of the town mayor and his own decline.

Don Ramon was also a good story teller. Scarce a day passed that a crowd could not be found, gathered in some public place, laughing at some tale of the mayor's, often at the expense of the cura or of his church.

"Now, I am not an heretic," Don Ramon would declare, "nor do I wish my town to be called a heretic town; but we do *protest* against the absurdities taught and imposed by our cura! For example: these *devotas* (devout women) who are about our streets now soliciting funds with which to buy an embroidered skirt for the Holy Virgin. Now, what does the Queen of Heaven, the 'Mother of God,' need of a

petticoat, unless it be to present it to our cura!

"We protest also against their lives of shameless immorality, for all know who in reality are the women they keep in their homes under names of sister, aunt, cousin or niece!

"And then this falsehood about purgatory! Why, men! Ye know that the priests get out of us, poor ignoramuses in Mexico, a great big pile of money, through purgatory, and this doctrine was not invented till by Pope Gregory, in the year fourteen hundred. Ye have heard me tell of young Rafael Gomez. Well, it seemed that after the death of his father, a few years ago, he had to pay repeated sums of money to get his father's soul from purgatory. The lad began to think, after a while, that his father was a good while getting out, so he asked the priest how much longer the job was going to be.

"'Well,' was the reply, 'your father is very nearly out now—all but his legs!'

"'Oh, well!' said the son, 'I know my father pretty well, and if he is that near out he can get out by himself now!'

"It was this same youngster who decided he wanted to marry his cousin. Now, the fellow did very wrong to wish to do such

a thing (to marry his cousin, I mean), because that is a great sin against the Holy Church. But the Church, seeing its advantage in keeping his favor, granted in his case a special dispensation. By payment of two thousand dollars the wrong in marrying his cousin would become a right. But he told them his money had all been sent to purgatory, so he and his cousin went across our northern boundary for the ceremony, where they now live, selling his property in Mexico to prevent it falling into the care of the Church.

"Now," continued Don Ramon, "we are told again and again instances of how baptism will save not only the soul, but the body. Indeed, in many cases where breath has almost left the body it returns again upon the rite of baptism. I was told, the other day, a story like this:

"A certain noted robber suddenly expressed alarm for his soul. He asked permission to meet the cura privately. He, with a few witnesses, were taken to the cura's house. The priest told him that baptism was the first essential. Immediately then, upon the baptism, there was a sudden commotion, and the robber fell to the floor; 'The Devil has gone out of

him, and carried off his sins!' was the cry. 'The Devil it was, sure, for they know him by his sulphur smoke and fumes!' But, alas! enough of the Devil had remained in the man to help him up to his feet and to escape through the back door during the excitement. And some of the cura's valuables were missing, too, from the back room.

"We all know, too, the advantage of supplications to our saints! Have you ever heard of good old Juana Remit? She was blessed with one of those affectionate spouses, the kind that kick and beat when dinner is a little late. Well, one day the charcoal would not burn, the frijoles and tortillas were not in time, and what to do, Juana did not know. Suddenly a thought hit her, and knocked her down under the image of her saint, and she begged of him help in some way. Just then the door opened, and in walked her spouse. The poor woman trembled when, to her amazement, she not only saw the tortillas a delicate brown, and the frijoles juicy and tender, but the cloth was also spread, and everything ready. The man declared he never had tasted better. Well, the next day the thankful Juana laid the charcoal,

put the frijoles and tortillas in their places, and asked the saint to again do the cooking.

"The man came in—but, alas—the poor woman limped for several days. The poor saint, too, had lost his head. A new one stands in his place!

"One more story," declared Don Ramon. "then I must go. When I was a boy I remember how proud some of the old women were of bits of bone which they hung about their necks. 'These are bits of the very bones of St. Peter,' they said, 'brought here clear from Rome. If we will wear them no harm will ever come to us!' People were buying them and wearing them all over the country, till I used to wonder if St. Peter had a bigger supply of bones than common folks. Suddenly it was found out that those bones had come from the bleached carcasses of horses out on the mesa near by. Then people stopped buying horses' bones, but the priests had already made quite a little pile of money."

CHAPTER XII.

SAINT FRANCISCO.

It was nearing the time for the yearly pilgrimages to the great Saint Francisco, in the town of Magdalena.

Aunt Eulalia would make one more effort to save the soul of her darling Constanca. A visit to this holy saint would bring the maiden to her senses.

"Next week falls the yearly feast to our great Saint Francisco," said Dona Eulalia to her brother. "Wilt thou accompany thy daughter and myself to the place?"

"And why should we go to visit that person, my sister? He has been dead this long time, has he not?" and again that merry laugh which always so irritated his sister, and never more than just then.

But she controlled herself, for she was not to be baffled.

"Ramon," she said severely, "thou dost keep thy daughter a perfect prisoner. She knows nothing outside her father's house and this town. Dost thou wish her to grow up so completely ignorant?"

No words could better have touched her brother. Whatever was to Constanca's advantage must be accomplished.

"Yes, yes," was the reply. "Certainly, we will go!"

But when the day for the departure arrived there was some trouble in the town, and the mayor could not leave; but his daughter and sister must not be disappointed.

It was quite a sight, the starting, for Don Ramon owned the only carriage in town; and many watched, as far as they could see, the carriage with its escort on horse, of Constancia's admirers, as it wound down the hillside out into the valley and plain, mingling in with many other processions.

"Saint Francisco is the great image which was let down from heaven," explained Aunt Eulalia as they journeyed. "He was lifted, by men, to be carried to the city, but he suddenly became so heavy that they were obliged to drop him, and no number of men could lift him again. By this sign they knew that the saint wished to remain on that spot. Hence, the church was built about him, and the town has grown into existence. Every year multitudes flock thither to be cured, to be forgiven, or to receive some blessing."

"What is he made of, Aunt?" inquired the girl.

"Of wood."

"How can a piece of wood cure disease or grant petitions?" asked the incredulous child.

"I can not explain to thee, child, but it must be true, for the priests so tell us."

It was night when the caravan entered the town, and Constančia and her aunt were carried to the meson (inn).

The next day brought many new sights to the young girl, among them the shrieking, puffing steam engine, that iron monster, which the men of the Northland had made, to carry them and their burdens back and forth into Mexico.

But they must fall into line with the crowds seeking the church of Saint Francisco. They passed some who were slowly and painfully making their way, crawling on bleeding and torn hands and knees, or rolling their bodies over and over, every little distance.

"These are poor penitentes," explained Aunt Eulalia, "doing penance for sins, which the saints will forgive!"

In the doorway of the church, upon a low table, lay the recumbent wooden image of the saint. The body was covered with a richly-embroidered velvet spread. The face was visible, and one foot, the big toe, quite clean, washed by many kisses and tears.

A heavy iron chest, with slit in the cover, received the offerings, before admittance could be gained to the side of the image. At each side of the door stood a priest selling candles which had been blessed, and which the purchaser was to send up to the altar to be burned, as masses were being said. Only a very few noticed that the same candles were passed in to the altar and out again, to be resold for twenty-five cents apiece.

"Dear child," said the aunt to Constancia, as they stood in the throng near to the image, "forget now thy father's blasphemous teachings, and yield thyself to the holy influence which already I feel stealing over me! Wilt thou kneel with me?"

"I await thee here, Aunt," said the girl, withdrawing, and could Aunt Eulalia have seen the raising of those eyebrows and the merry twinkle in those bright eyes, so like her father's, her prayers would have been distracted with conflicting thoughts.

The grounds about the church were a babel of noises. Vendors shouting their sweets and drinks, a merry-go-round, roulette, and other games of chance to draw the crowd. The girl's lips curled with scorn as she noted the worship and

supplication within, barter and commerce without.

Suddenly she heard a voice singing, a man's voice, clear and sweet, above the din of the crowd. It seemed to call her, and without thought she started toward it.

Under a tree, in one corner of the yard, was a table covered with books and papers. Besides the table stood two men. One with a book, the Bible, in his hand, reading and explaining as he read, while ever and anon the voice of the singer broke out:

"There is something better than this, my friends,

It is Jesus, Jesus' love;

Come to him now and listen while he calls,
For he calls thee from above."

"There are the heretics," she heard one say, "from the city below us. The young one is the 'Angel Voice,' whom the heretics kidnaped several years ago."

It was Frederico, now having completed his studies, and he and his mother were back again with the missionary.

Still Constancia drew nearer, and stood and listened, while the voice sang on. The song had touched her soul. Or was it the eyes of the singer which had found her heart?

The song was ended, and the crowd be-

gan to scatter. Some stopped to listen further to the missionary, or to accept his leaflets. Noticing Constancla, he pleasantly drew her into conversation, learning her name and home, the singer meanwhile silently standing by watching the beautiful face. The searching, questioning look of those big, mournful eyes had found at last their answer in the face of Constancla.

Then the heretic teacher presented these two young people, each to the other, but while they talked together, Aunt Eulalia hurriedly came up, and snatching the girl away whispered excitedly:

"Child, child! What hast thou done? These are those accursed heretics—oh, alma mia, what hast thou done?"

But to the aunt's horror, the next day Constancla again sought the heretics. All through the day she stayed where she could listen to the singer, could hear and talk to both.

"Alas, alas! How am I thwarted!" cried poor Aunt Eulalia to herself. "I bring my girl here to be drawn back into the fold of her holy Church, and here she is drifting farther than ever, right into the arms of these dreadful heretics!"

That night brought a messenger from Don Ramon, instead of the man himself,

saying he could not come, and that they were to return the next day, early, before Constanca could again see her new-found friends, the heretics.

Aunt Eulalia was glad in her heart that the girl would be prevented further intercourse with them. And Constanca was glad in her heart, for the promise they had made to her to visit her town, if her father would send to them the permission. And she carried, hidden in her belongings, the New Testament, which the heretic teacher had sent as a present to her father.

That night, as Constanca sat by her father's side, she showed him the little book which the heretic had sent, and told him the story which the heretic told, and gave him the request for permission to visit the town.

"Yes," said Don Ramon, "he must be a good man, and I like what he tells. I will write him to come!"

But not a word had the maiden told of the songs or of the singer that had found her heart.

CHAPTER XIII.

STRONG ENOUGH AND BRAVE ENOUGH.

In due time they came—the heretic missionary, with his Bibles and his papers, and the young singer, with his beautiful voice and songs.

“Why didst thou not tell me, too, of the singer, my daughter?” inquired Don Ramon.

But the maid, dropping her eyes, could not reply. Yet there was something about the quiet, slim young man that the mayor liked. He, himself, placed at their disposal an empty hall where they might preach and sing the gospel story. He, too, accompanied by his daughter, went to the meetings and invited them both, the preacher and his singer, to visit them in his home. Ah, why was Don Ramon so blind! It so happened that the town school was without a teacher, he having been summarily dismissed a few days before by the mayor because of intemperate habits. It was decided that Frederico, the singer, could take the school until the close of the year. His mother was to come to him by next stage,

and they were to occupy a little house Don Ramon selected for them not far from his own home.

Ah, why was he again so blind and so blundering!

When it became known that a heretic was in charge of the public school, many of the children were taken out, and the cura established a parochial school. But most of them returned one by one, to learn the beautiful songs that the new teacher taught; songs of their country, their own beloved country; the songs of Jesus, too, were sweet, though the mothers wished there were some to the blessed Holy Virgin. The cura found, alas, the town was growing heretic, spite of all he could do.

One morning, while the young teacher was occupied with classes, the priest stood suddenly in the door.

The children, startled, drew together. Frederico stepped to meet him and bade him enter.

"Yes, I enter!" was the reply, "even the abode of an heretic, that I may warn these dear young children. These innocents know not their danger. Their parents are the guilty ones. Their souls are already condemned! But, children, I do not my duty if I warn not once again! Terrible

things will happen if ye continue to receive instruction from this heretic teacher. He teaches contrary to the doctrines of the Holy Church, and she says that no one can be saved outside the Church. This teacher, then, will be lost, and ye, too, if ye continue to listen to him. This man teaches, moreover, from the Protestant Bible, which is false. This is not the true Bible. Let me prove it to ye. For example"—

"Children, what is the first commandment?"

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me.' "

"Right—now the second?"

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image'"—

"Stop there, children! Thus teaches the Protestant Bible, and this shows its falseness. The second commandment is, 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.' "

"What is the third, children?"

"Thou shalt not take'"—

"No, no—that is the second commandment. Let me repeat—the third commandment is:

"Remember the Sabbath day,' etc.

"The fourth is, 'Honor thy father and thy mother.'

"The fifth is, 'Thou shalt not kill.'

"The sixth is, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.'

"The seventh is, 'Thou shalt not steal.'

"The eighth is, 'Thou shalt not bear false witness.'

"The ninth is, 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife,' etc.

"The tenth is, 'Thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbor's.'

"This, children, shows ye how the Protestants have perverted even the Ten Commandments, inserting as the second commandment what is not in the original, or true, Bible.

"Even the true Bible is not to be read alone by common people. It must be explained by the priests, much less, then, is the Protestant Bible to be read. This teacher uses not the catechism of the Holy Church. How, then, can he teach the truth? The Bible does not contain all instruction necessary for salvation. Indeed, were every copy in the world to be destroyed, it would not matter. The traditions and other teachings of the Church are inspired and contain the doctrines of eternal life fully as much as does the Bible.

"I see thou hast one of these heretic Bibles here!" added the cura, turning to-

ward the teacher's desk. "I will take it!"

But the young maestro was too quick for him.

"Hand it over to me!" demanded the priest.

"It is my property," was the quiet reply.

The whole town was astir with the story of the encounter and how the slim young man ordered the priest to leave in such tone that he obeyed.

"That quiet young man was strong enough and brave enough to meet and to conquer the cura!" said Don Ramon that night, while his daughter sat by his side.

"Then he is strong and brave enough to take and to keep my daughter," he added in husky tone as to himself.

And she, listening, bowed her head and blushed.

Oh, the old man had not been so stupid and so blind after all.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE POWER OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

The next Sabbath, there was read, from the church pulpit, the names of those excommunicated; and, heading the list, was the town mayor and the young heretic teacher.

"Oh, my people!" cried the cura, in tremulous tones. "Terrible things are yet to be visited upon this town because ye dare defy God's holy priest. Ye defy not me, but the Holy Church and the Almighty, whose representatives we are. Ye seem to have forgotten the powers of God's holy priests.

"In order to give to his priests the power of saying mass, our Lord Jesus had to die. To redeem the world, it was necessary that our Lord should die. A single drop of his sacred blood, a single tear, a single prayer of his would have sufficed. But in order to establish the priesthood, our Lord Jesus *had* to die.

"On Mount Calvary, the priest that offered the sacrifice was our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and in the holy sacrifice of

the mass, the *priest* that offers sacrifice is also our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Great was the power which God gave to man, but the power given by Christ to his priests is infinitely greater. Whenever they say mass, they hold in their hands after the words of consecration, Jesus Christ, their Lord and God, to receive him and to give him to all those who wish to receive him in holy communion. This power of the priest surpasses even the power of creation. By creation, God produces the substance of bread, out of nothing, by his word. But, by words of priests, in consecration, the substance of bread and wine is changed into the most sacred body and blood of Christ. To whom shall I compare the priest? Next to God, his equal can not be found even in heaven or earth.

"And more,—power is given to priests to free men from their sins. Seek where you will, through heaven and earth, you will find but one created being who can forgive sins, and that is the priest, the Catholic priest.

"Who can forgive sins except God? was the question which the Pharisees sneeringly asked. Who can forgive sins? is the question which the Pharisees of the present day also ask; and I answer, There is a

man on earth who can forgive sins, and that man is a Catholic priest. The sinner who goes to the priest in confession will be just as well absolved as the sinner who goes to the blessed Lord himself. The priest not only declares that the sinner is forgiven, but he really forgives him. The priest raises his hand, he pronounces the words of absolution, and in an instant, quick as a flash, the chains of hell are burst asunder and the sinner becomes a child of God. So great is the power of the priest that the judgments of heaven itself are subject to his decision. The priest absolves on earth, and God absolves in heaven. The priest is the ambassador, the plenipotentiary of God. He is the co-operator, the assistant of God in the work of redemption. 'We are the co-operators and assistants of God' (I Cor. 3).

(These words are quoted from "God the Teacher of Mankind," Michael Muller.)

"To the priest also is given the power of preaching the Word of God, and governing the faithful. They also have power to bless or consecrate things for the divine service, as altars, chalices, vestments, churches, holy water and the bread and wine."

Many were so impressed with the powers of the priesthood that they removed

their children from the heretic school. Aunt Eulalia felt obliged to leave her brother's roof and seek another abiding place.

But time passed on, and a second year found Frederico and his mother still in the town of Altiza and the heretic maestro still directing the town school.

CHAPTER XV.

TESTED.

The old town church stood backing against the rocky mountain slope. Its front tower looked down over the houses, and from this tower the bell called the devout to worship. The back tower was seldom entered.

Up the dark stairway, leading into this tower, there stepped slowly, one evening, two men. They were lifting, or rather leading, something between them. It was a girl. It was Constancia.

Reaching the landing, they paused a moment, when one took from his pocket a key. The door grated on rusty hinges as it opened before them.

"Madre Santisima! How I hate to entomb so beautiful a creature here! Foolish maident, recant! I will bear thy word to the priest, that thou spend not this night here!"

The girl made no reply, but she shuddered, and closed her eyes as they drew her within, locking the door upon her.

She wondered why she had not called for help as they led her along the passageway. None could hear her now! But sinking upon her knees, there went up from her heart a strong cry to her God, the God she had learned to love since she had known and loved her Frederico. Then looking about her in the twilight, she saw the dusty cobwebs hanging, and above her the iron-grated window, so high that she could only reach her fingers through the bars as she stood upon her tiptoes. In one corner of the little room was a piece of native mat, and near it a brazero (earthen jar), with bits of half-burned charcoal. An earthen cup lay upon the floor, and Constanca shivered as she wondered if the poor unfortunate who had been allowed to warm her "atole" on these coals had been a girl like herself, and whether she had escaped.

Night had filled the room, but still she crouched upon the floor waiting and thinking.

She understood it all now. Why Aunt Eulalia had sent for her on pretext of illness. How she had begged her to renounce her heresy, and how at last she had in anger bade her return home, but as a last favor, asked her to go to see little Rosita, Constanca's little protege, who was sick

in the priest's house in care of the housekeeper. Aunt Eulalia had arisen from her bed, dressed herself and accompanied her to the back door of the cura's dwelling, where the housekeeper had met Constan-
cia, and led her in to Rosita's bedside. Aunt Eulalia had promised to return soon.

But as time passed and no return, Constan-
cia asked to be shown to the door.

"Yes, chulita, this way to the side exit,"
said the housekeeper, leading. Suddenly
the girl found herself in a room facing
the priest, her father's enemy.

There were, at first, a few words of greet-
ing, then expostulations, warning and
finally two servants were called, and she
was led through an inner passage, by
way of the church, up into the back church
tower.

She understood the plot, yet she held
no ill-will against her aunt, for she knew
how anxious was that aunt that she return
to the fold of the Church, and she knew
that priests taught that any means what-
ever were right to bring thereby the er-
ring back again.

More easily could she have forgiven her
Aunt Eulalia had she known that at that
hour Eulalia's heart was filled with re-
morse, and she had taken to her bed, sick
in truth this time.

But the girl's heart would have been more filled with alarm had she known that at that time, also, sat the priest full of rejoicing, for at last had come the hour for which he long waited, the time for his revenge upon Don Ramon, her father.

Meanwhile, as night came on and no Constanica in the home, her father sought her at Eulalia's dwelling.

"Yes," replied the sick woman, "Constancia was here, but she has gone home with Dona Rita's girls. They took her with them in their carriage. I was to let you know, Constanica said, but I was suddenly taken too ill to go or send any one, as thou dost see, brother. Forgive me!"

Don Ramon was ill at ease. The whole affair was unlike his daughter. But he could not doubt his sister. He would wait till morning. The old man who had unwillingly helped in conducting Constanica to the tower resolved to let her father know. But, upon reflection, he knew this would be an unwise step, for the girl was completely in the power of the priest, who could even put her to death before the father might arrive with help. He resolved to watch and wait.

Her lover passed an anxious night. Calling at her home and not finding her there,

Don Ramon with apparent unconcern told him she was out of town. But the young man detected the hidden tone of anxiety, and could not quiet a certain unrest in his own mind.

Constancia could not tell how she herself passed the night. Her dreams and waking thoughts seemed one. Would her father and her lover miss her, and would they find her? Had her God, whom she trusted, forgotten her?

At light of day, she arose and moved about, though she felt weak and ill. She strained herself to reach her fingers through the window bars, looking through to the sky and the few morning clouds floating past. Suddenly there flew across her vision a flock of birds. Pigeons, they were, flying and circling about the tower where were their nests. She watched them intently as they passed again and again. One, there was, a snow white pigeon among them. They all drew nearer, when suddenly she cried out, "Oh, oh! There is Purisimo, Frederico's Purisimo!" and reaching her fingers through the window bars, she called the little, low cry by which she had often called him to her side and held him while Frederico had called them both "his purisima."

The bird circled round and round, drew

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nearer and lit upon her fingers. She turned them about his feet and drew him within, clasping him to herself, kissing him and crying. Then, with a sudden thought, she sprang, holding him the while, and tearing the hem from her handkerchief, snatching a bit of charcoal, wrote, "Constancia—Torre." Then fastening this around Purisimo's wing, she kissed him again and pushed him through the window.

Frederico was restlessly walking up and down the back yard. He had risen early that morn and walked out to town, to the house of Dona Rita. They knew nothing of Constancia. He had resolved to keep his anxiety from her father. He had asked a friend to take charge of his school for the day, and was about to start on his quest, when Purisimo flew over the wall, settled upon the ground and began to pick at his wing.

Frederico noticed the bird and the white strip and removed it. When to his horror, he deciphered the words and understood. He must not even tell his mother or her father. All caution was necessary. He knew the old man, the church guardian, who had the keys.

"Yes," replied the old man, "I, too, am keeping watch of that fair maid up there.

I had said to myself, 'She is not to be left there much longer. There have been others sent there, who have never returned, but this one comes down!' Keep the front door of the cura's residence in sight, and when thou dost see him take his departure, slip thou into the church, and there I will find thee and we will bring her out."

The priest himself had visited the tower that morning. The brave girl refused to recant. Her "obstinacy" alarmed the man. If it should be known that she was imprisoned, his life would be in danger. Yet he had undertaken the case and he must see it through to the end. He would wait till night; hunger, thirst, loneliness and fright would surely conquer then. Still, in his anxiety, he stayed about the place all day. Toward evening, in answer to an urgent call, Frederico, still on watch, saw him depart.

Through the long day the girl had in turn scanned the sky, walked the floor and sank upon her knees.

As darkness again came on, she crouched, faint and sick, upon the mat. Surely, surely, her God would not forget her. Then she thought, or dreamed, that her lover had come and taken her in his arms and borne her off, so swift and strong. She heard steps without, the door opened

and a man in a long black cloak leaned toward her.

"It is the priest again!" she thought. But she had no strength to cry out. She closed her eyes. He lifted her quickly into his arms. She opened her eyes, looked into his, knew her lover and fainted. After she had come out from her long illness, they told her how Aunt Eulalia had scarce left her bedside, begging for forgiveness and to be taken again into her brother's home. "No more of priests for me!" she said.

They told her, too, how her father, Don Ramon, had from that day been searching town and country for the cura, but never yet had he been found, and the town of Altiza had need to find another priest.

CHAPTER XVI.

A WEDDING GUEST.

Not very long after the events recorded in the last chapter, there came to the town of Altiza some strangers. People of high birth, it was said, and the daughter was a beauty, more lovely than even Constanca. So said the discarded admirers of Constanca. The two girls had become acquainted.

"She is one of those condemned heretics. Thou must not associate with her!" so said friends to the newcomer. But in spite of warning, the two girls became fast friends. Frederico, too, was much drawn toward this new friend.

"She makes me think of a queen, so beautiful and stately she is!" said Frederico one day. "And yet, there is something about her that makes me feel as though I have always known her. I wonder what it is. Perhaps it is because her name is Mariana, the name of my long-lost sister. Whenever she is here talking with us, there comes over me a strange feeling, as though I had known her

when we were children. Yet, Constanca, with all her beauty, she is not one-half as lovely as thou art!"

The marriage day was now fast approaching. The Protestant minister was to come to perform the service.

"Mariana Gavina must be present, for she is one of us now, and she must find an heretic husband, too," exclaimed Constanca.

"Methinks there would be more than one young man willing to turn heretic for that fair hand!" said Aunt Eulalia.

Dona Alicia, Frederico's mother, sighed as she sat and listened. She had heard so much of the beautiful Mariana Gavina, yet she had not met her. The name made her think as of her own little Marianita who left her on that summer afternoon, never to return. She hardly knew whether she cared to know another with that same name.

Not even the bride Constanca was more beautiful that wedding eve than the guest Mariana, and Dona Alicia could not remove her gaze from that lovely face.

"Oh, what is it, what is it!" she kept saying to herself all the eve. "What can it be! Those eyes are the eyes of my own little girl." Ah, who can explain a mother's instincts?

"Child," she exclaimed, at last approaching and taking her by the hand. "Tell me thy name! Is it Mariana Gavina?"

"Why, yes, senora—that is, it is now. But it used to be Mariana Peralta. I was stolen"—

But the mother was weeping, with her arms about the girl. Then Frederico understood why he felt that he had always known Mariana, his sister.

"A strange ending," all said, "for a wedding feast. Strange, yet happy!"

But many strange things had been happening lately in that little heretic town.

"How rich I am now; I have two daughters!" exclaimed Dona Alicia.

But Mariana's foster parents could not truly rejoice because she had found her own mother.

"Come and live with us!" said Dona Refugia to Dona Alicia. "For a while, at least; for we can not part at once with her. She has grown to us as our very own."

So the young couple were left to begin life together in the pleasant new home which Don Ramon had finished for his daughter.

"She still must stay near by!" said the fond father. And the young heretic teacher still managed the town school.

CHAPTER XVII.

AURELIO.

Far across the republic, in the great capital city of Mexico, had been growing up all these years, a young man, tall, straight and handsome.

Aurelio Mendez he was, who, when a boy, had been stolen for a ransom.

He was now left an orphan, but had learned to carefully keep the money left to him. He had traveled much, over his own country and in other lands. In Europe he had fitted himself for a physician, and again, in his home city, was known as the skillful and popular Dr. Mendez.

"Favored man!" his companions were accustomed to say to him. "Talented, traveled and handsome! Blushing señoritas and covetous mammas follow thee with longing eyes, and yet to none of their charms dost thou yield. Thy heart is of stone. Or hast thou a heart?"

"Ah, ye have at last guessed aright. I have no heart! It was left long, long ago in a little shanty in a canon's mouth far in the wilds. It has not since returned! Perchance I may yet run across it!"

And the young doctor would gaily laugh, and move about as if to rid himself of some clinging shadow. But in his own room, and alone, a quiet mood would steal over him, and opening his chest, he would draw from it a paper box, and lift from thence a long shining curl. And again he would see those eyes, like stars, looking up into his, and could feel a little shorn head against his shoulder, and a child's voice saying, "I love thee, Aurelio! I trust thee, and thou wilt come again and take me hence!"

There were many Protestants in the City of Mexico, so many that they were not an unpopular people. And some of the doctor's best friends were of their number. Still, he prided himself in belonging to "no church." "Religion is good enough for women," he said. "A man, and especially a doctor, can get on without it!"

And yet he took great interest in all that counted for his country's good.

President Diaz, Mexico's good, grand man, was then in his young strength, and Dr. Aurelio courted every opportunity to see and to hear him. Mexico's past history and her struggles were to him a fascinating study, and his leisure hours often found him admiring anew the stately monument of Hidalgo or the wonderful

recumbent statue of Benito Juarez. He found, too, that in Mexico was worshiped two Virgins, "La Virvin de los Remedios," which Spain had brought to Mexico, and the "Lady of Guadalupe," benefactress of the native Mexicans. She it was who had appeared to the Indian, Juan Diego, and for whom the shrine at Guadalupe had been built. Her paintings represent her in blue cloak, covered with stars, her foot on a crescent and her hands clasped. On either side of her, within the frame, are strings of gold and jewels. Above all hangs a silver dome.

The Spanish "Virgin de los Remedios" is dressed in embroidered satin, strings of pearls hanging from neck to knees, her crown inlaid with emeralds and her belt with diamonds. She wears three skirts, the first embroidered with pearls, the second with emeralds and the third with diamonds. Aurelio was told that her skirts alone are valued at three millions of dollars. The great cathedral, too, was grand and imposing, the altars within, gorgeous and glittering, the images and paintings, expansive and wonderful.

He made a study of other cities, also, among them the famous city of Puebla, where he saw the old convent which the Protestants (Methodists) have purchased

and converted into their mission. He was told how, when the walls were broken into, there were revealed cells, and skeletons of men and women who had been cemented alive, prisoners within their cells. Excavations revealed underground apartments where were strewn the bones of infants. Passages, too, there were, secret passages within the walls leading to the apartments of the nuns. Thus was revealed to him part of the workings of the Holy Church of Rome. In one of the churches in this city, his attention was called to a printed prayer, framed and hanging near the door, which, translated, read as follows:

"Most Holy Virgin of Guadalupe, glorious Daughter of God, the Father, Mother of God, the Son and Wife of God, the Holy Spirit, my lady consecrated and sanctified before thou wast created, I pray thee my patron saint and lady, that if to-day, if this moment, if this hour, or if during the remainder of my life, or in death, any sentence should be passed against me, or against anything of mine, it may be, by thy intercession, revoked, and by the hand of thy Son, Jesus Christ, be turned aside. Amen. Jesus."

There was also a notice pasted near, "His Holiness and the Bishops have

granted indulgence, for this mass, thirty-two thousand years, ten days and six hours."

In some of the cities, in Mexico, there was continued warnings against incroaching heretics.

One day he heard read from the pulpit, extracts from one of the standard authorities of the Church of Rome, and therefore safely quoted all over Mexico. ("God, the Teacher of Mankind," "The Church and Its Enemies," by Michael Muller.)

"We need not fear these heretics," began the preacher; "they will, in God's own time, come to naught. Let me read to you from our own safe authority:

"Protestantism has never been able to convert a heathen nation, although it has every human means in its power. It had a vast number of ministers, plenty of ships to carry these ministers to every country, boundless wealth and great armies and navies to terrify the heathen, also its merchants scattered through every quarter of the globe; with all this, Protestantism has not converted a nation, nor even a city or tribe of heathens, to Christianity after these hundred years of existence. It has been ascertained that, during the last fifty years, Protestantism in

Europe and America has collected and spent over one hundred and twenty-five millions of dollars for the purpose of converting the heathen. One hundred million Bibles, Testaments and tracts have been printed in various languages and scattered throughout the world. Five thousand missionaries, with large salaries, varying from one hundred to five hundred pounds each, and also an additional allowance for their wives and families, are kept annually employed in the work, and yet all to no purpose. No result whatever can be shown.

“During every month of May, the various sects of Protestants hold their anniversary meetings in London and New York. At these gatherings speeches are made and reports read, in which the people are told of the wonderful conversions which are just going to take place; of pagans stretching, or about to stretch, out their hands to God; of schools to be opened; of sums spent in Bibles, Testaments and tracts. Every promise is made for the future, but nothing whatever is shown for the past. The meetings are ended, votes of thanks given to the various chairmen, prayers said, subscriptions received, and the huge delusion lives on from year to year.

"Some of the missionaries give up the work in despair; others in disgust; others fly from persecution, being terrified at the very idea of martyrdom. One missionary comes back to his native country, because of the sudden death of his wife; another to bury his youngest daughter in her mother's grave; another leaves the field of his labor to console his dear mother on her death bed; another comes home to look after some small property left to him; another comes home because his wife has quarreled with the wives of some of the other missionaries.

"Many Protestant missionaries give up the work of saving souls for more lucrative positions, or to become merchants on their own account, or for some good governmental situation.

"Protestant travelers and writers who have visited the fields of Protestant missionary labor, have themselves furnished the world with these details. They tell of a few converts, here and there, who relapse into paganism whenever the missionaries withdraw. They tell us that the missionaries become tyrants, and persecute the people when they get the chance; that they drive the natives into the Protestant meeting houses by force, and make them more brutal, profligate, crafty,

treacherous, impure and disgusting than they were before. One writer states how he found, in the Sandwich Islands, that the Protestant missionaries had civilized the people into draught horses, and evangelized them into beasts of burdens; that they were literally broken into the traces and harnessed to the vehicles of their spiritual conductors, like so many beasts of burden. The missionaries are dwelling in picturesque and prettily furnished coral rock villas, while the miserable natives are committing all sorts of crime and immortality about them. (Quoted from Muller.)

"Now, why can not Protestants convert the heathen? Because they have no power. They are a false sect. They have no head; every Protestant believes what he chooses. Indeed, the founders of this sect were all wicked men, and they only immitate their leader, Martin Luther, who was a licentious man and left the Church because he wished to marry. There is no such thing as salvation to a Protestant. No one is saved out side of the Holy Mother Church. She is the only one true and living apostolic church. I say apostolic, because she can show precisely how she obtained possession of the divine authority of the apostles. The Roman Pon-

tiff, Pius IX, can name the two hundred and fifty-three popes, who, without a break, handed down the authority of St. Peter, the head of the apostles, even to himself. He can tell the day and hour of his election and consecration, which are consigned to imperishable monuments.' "

Often the young doctor had felt a desire to see again the scenes and home of his boyhood. He had read, years before, of the ravages of the yellow fever along the Western Coast, and among the list of its victims was the family of Peralta. This knowledge had prevented his putting into execution his long-felt desire. But at length he yielded. His old hacienda home he would not have recognized. The city, too, the home of his boyhood friend, Mariana, he would not have known. He remained some time in the city, and here learned to know and admire the heretic missionary. From him he too learned to know and to love the heretic's God. "I will make amends for my life of indifference and infidelity. I will do all I can in this, my childhood country, to help and to heal both body and soul."

And so the young heretic doctor was much in demand.

One day he was telling the Protestant

missionary of the time when he was kidnaped.

"Why, yes," was the reply; "I have been told all about it, too. It is a story well known still. And the young man, Peralta, brother of the stolen girl, is our loved and esteemed school teacher in the town of Altiza."

"And has nothing ever been known of his sister?" asked the doctor.

The heretic was about to relate to him the story of the wedding night and its wonderful discovery. But what spirit of mischief was it which so suddenly possessed the good man! for he answered with apparent indifference:

"Why, yes, something has been known about the girl. But I am going to the town next week where lives her brother. Thou must accompany me, and he will tell thee what they have learned about the young lady, for she still lives."

And of all the happy findings of mother and children, of sister and brother, perhaps none was more sweet or more tender than the finding again of the little child lovers of the robber haunts.

And the little slender gold chain and the long shining curl found their rightful owners.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A WORK WELL FINISHED.

Meanwhile, down in the city below, many changes had taken place. The best front room, for preaching, in the heretic's dwelling, had been exchanged for a neat chapel, largely the gift of friends in his own home land. The man himself, "leader of the heretics," he was still called, had grown older, a few silver threads scattered through the brown hairs. But still, with that winning smile of his, he walked the streets, or traveled in his little cart over the mountains, preaching in the villages and mining camps. He never carried weapons. He said they were never an advantage, rather a disadvantage.

"Are you not afraid, as you travel back and forth alone, and walk these streets alone at night?" had asked his wife.

"Why should I be afraid? I am safe till my work is done."

"You are reckless, are you not?"

"Call it what you please, but I am not afraid. This work my Master has given me to do is his. And I know I am per-

fectly safe till my work, not his, is finished."

The woman made no reply, though there came to her mind how he had told her of repeatedly being followed on the streets by some one, who, whenever he turned, had fled. The last time he had caught sight of a dark line across his forehead, and there was a gleam of metal thrust quickly under his long cloak.

One sultry summer afternoon he was nearing the city from a neighboring village. From the west, where rolled the broad Pacific, he saw clouds arise. Rapidly they grew, higher and blacker, cleft ever and anon with flashes of lightning.

"God pity the mariner in his ship this night!" prayed the man in his heart.

He hastened his horse, for there was fast approaching one of those tropical storms he knew so well.

Already, over the city before him, swirled clouds of dust, thrown high and driven along by the mighty wind. Birds were scuttling along with tilted wing, rabbits scurrying to the bushes. Then the storm struck the woods he was entering. The trees along the roadside tossed their branches and lashed each other as if in fury. Tall alamo trees bowed and bent till their plumed branches swept the

ground. Surely they will snap and break! But no—after a moment, shivering, they slowly rise and straighten themselves to await the next mighty breath. The blackness had shut down close upon him, when suddenly there was a blinding flash of light, a crash and roar, and the horse leaped to one side, while at the same instant were emptied the clouds, not in gentle drops, but torrents that deluged and swept from under feet, almost the ground itself.

Again the horse leaped to one side, for across the path lay a man dead or frightened.

"Should he pass him and leave him there—he was in such haste?"

But no, a part of his work was to quiet his terrified horse, arouse the man and lift him into the seat by his side. The man leaned heavily against him, well nigh unconscious from his fright, and as his hat fell, the missionary saw an ugly scar across his temple.

The storm had spent itself. They were nearing the city when the man, drawing a dagger from his side and throwing it into the bottom of the cart, cried out:

"Oh, Senor; take this! With it I meant to kill you! I have followed you time after time to kill you. But some power has always restrained me. I never could reach

you. I am 'El mozo del Diabolo' (the devil's errand boy). For any bloody deed I have ever been ready, because they pay me money. I do not hate thee. I sought not thy life for hatred, but because I loved the money they gave me. I have listened to your words, Senor, and they are good. I thought once to give up this life, and when I found money, jewels and pearls in the house of Peralta, I thought to be a man and go away and live like men. But alas, I spent it all in riotous living. I came back again to this city, hungry and poor, and became again 'the devil's errand boy' because of money which they give me. But I can not touch you. Oh, can you, can you forgive me!"

The heretic forgave by taking him to his home, where, dried and fed, they talked together of Jesus and his forgiveness.

"'The devil's errand boy' has turned heretic!" was the news. "Who will be the next?"

But all noted the changed man, the new man, in his right mind. And never was there a follower more loyal, more loving to the heretic, than this same "Mozo del Diabolo."

But there came a strange, sad day into the heretic's home. From one of the mining camps he had brought a fatal fever's

germs, and for days its fires burned and burned and would not be quenched.

His little daughter and the woman who loved him kneeled by his bedside while there crept over them the strange, awful stillness. Even the little boys, talking together in the corridor, lowered their voices, while the baby lisped, "Where is papa going?"

The little mourning dove that had been nesting in the big fig tree down in the garden, had left her home, and all day long, flitting hither and thither, had kept up her mournful call:

"Come—back—to—me. Come—back—to me!"

The woman shuddered and hid her face as she listened to its cry. All day long she had felt that strange presence in the room, yet she had refused it recognition. Nearer and still nearer it crept, silently, waiting to claim and bear away its victim.

Then in her desperation, she turned and cried:

"Depart, oh, depart, grim Death! Thou who didst take from me my little one, my first born! Art thou come again to take from me my husband, him whom I need, him whom I lean upon? Go, go; for I need him; his little ones need him! Leave us at least till his children are older, till

his baby may know to remember his father.
Oh, spare us!"

But there came no answer, save the little moaning dove.

Then the woman threw her arms about the dying husband, as if to hold him back. He opened his eyes and looked at her, then looked beyond and smiled.

"It is Jesus," he whispered. "Let me go, but do not let God's work stop!"

Ah, he was glad to go! Then Death was no terrible thing. It was Jesus himself come to take to rest his servant, his loved one, whose work was finished.

"Ah, Death, thou art no longer terrible to me. Thou art no longer cruel. Thou art welcome. Oh, take me, too!" she cried.

But in her heart she heard, "Not yet, my daughter; thy work is not yet finished. Thy little ones need thee, and there is much yet to be done for my dear children of Mexico!"

That night, silently, there came into the room, one by one, those whom he had loved; those for whom he had gladly left home and dear ones; silently, one by one, they came into the room, till the room was full.

"We will stay with thee all through the night and watch with thee!" they said.

"Oh," cried the woman in her heart,

"can ye not leave me alone, alone with my dead this last, last night—this last night!"

Again there was an answer, "Daughter, thou mayst not be selfish, even in thy grief! He was theirs, as well as thine!"

At midnight the door opened softly, and two young men stepped in, Aurelio and Frederico. Silently, they stood and looked upon the face of him they loved.

"We have journeyed all day and into the night that we might see once more and speak to our much loved teacher. But we are too late!"

Then it was Frederico, the quiet one, who kneeled and prayed.

"Great God, thou hast seen fit to take from us our well-loved teacher! He who taught us the way to thee. He lived for us; his last thought was for us, for Mexico.

"Then, oh, God, wilt thou now teach us, that we and others, many others, may take up the work he has laid down; that we may carry it on, and on, and on, till all in our own dear Mexico may know and acknowledge Jesus, Jesus only, as Savior; that Mexico may know no priest, no Virgin, no saint as mediator; but Jesus only, and God, as Father, above all."

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